

ALPHONSE DAUDET

Rose and Ninette

A STORY OF THE MORALS AND MANNERS
OF THE DAY

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London

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PATERNOSTER SQUARE

MDCCXCI

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*A STORY OF THE MORALS AND MANNERS
OF THE DAY.*



I.

DIVORCED two weeks since, and still intoxicated with the happiness of his release from bondage, Régis de Fagan, on a certain morning, was watching through the wide-open windows of his recently acquired bachelor's apartment for the arrival of his young daughters,

whom the court had granted to him for two Sundays in every month. This was their first Sunday, and of all the letters from women that, as a popular *vaudevilliste*, he had seen showered upon his table for some twenty years past, few indeed had stirred his heart with so strong an emotion as this simple note received the day before :

My dear Father,—We shall arrive at Passy to-morrow morning by the ten o'clock train. Mademoiselle will leave us at 37, Boulevard Beauséjour, and will return for us in the evening, at nine o'clock precisely.

Your respectful and very affectionate daughter,

ROSE DE FAGAN.

Underneath, in her large and still somewhat uncertain writing,

the younger sister had signed
“Ninette.”

And now in the anguish of waiting, he was asking himself if they would really come ; if, at the last moment, the mother, wily and unscrupulous, or that inscrutable Mademoiselle, might not invent some excuse to detain them. Not that he doubted the affection of his children ! But he felt that they were so young—Rose scarcely sixteen, Nina not yet twelve—both so powerless to resist a hostile influence—the more so, as, since leaving the convent, after the divorce, they had remained with their mother and the governess. His lawyer, indeed, had said to him : “ It is not an equal match,

my poor Régis ; you will have only two days a month in which to make yourself loved ! ” No matter ; with those two days well employed, the father felt that he would be able to retain the hearts of his darlings ; but those two days he absolutely needed, without tricks, without subterfuges. And becoming more and more anxious as the hour approached, more strongly agitated by the anticipation of this interview than he had ever been by that of any other in his existence—whether of a tender or of a business nature—De Fagan, violently impatient, thrust his tall form out of the window, looking up and down the green and peaceful suburban boulevard, bordered

on one side by the railroad screened by a trellis and a hedge, and on the other by a row of elegant mansions with broad steps, vases of flowers and carefully kept lawns.

“ Good-day, father—here we are ! ”

“ You ! But where did you get in ? and how ? ”.

In his feverish desire to watch the hour, the trains, the passers-by on the boulevard, he had not seen them coming, and here they burst upon him now out of the little antechamber ; they were there, before him, grown taller, he fancied, and more womanly, in the two months during which they had not seen each other. His hands trembled as he helped them

to take off their close-fitting jackets and their round hats trimmed with feathers. The girls, too, were a little embarrassed by the novelty of the situation. Of course their father was always their father, the good-humoured papa who had played with them so delightfully and danced them on his knee when they were children; but he was no longer the husband of their mother, and thence a change which they felt, which they could not describe, which was revealed in the naïve wonder in their eyes.

This embarrassment disappeared little by little during their inspection of the apartment—which the girls had not before seen—bright in the clear May sunshine, some

of the rooms opening on the boulevard, the others on the little garden of the house, which the surrounding foliage made seem larger than it was. Almost all of the furniture was new. In the study, however, the children recognized the bookcase, and the large writing-table, the dangerous corners of which paternal forethought had caused to be rounded off. What memories were associated with every corner of those massive pieces of furniture, with the twisted brasses of their drawers !

“Do you remember, Ninette, that time when mamma——”

But Ninette, the younger sister, quick and vivacious in a different way from the elder, cut short the

anecdote by a look. For, before sending her daughters to their father, Mme. de Fagan, now Mme. Ravaut, she having resumed her maiden name, had charged them strictly not to mention her or give any information with regard to her present way of living or her future projects, in case of an indelicate inquiry ; and knowing that Rose, the elder, was thoughtless and giddy, she had given these charges more particularly to Ninette, whose little face was truly comical with all the closeness, the reticence expressed in the corners of the mouth, the sharpness, the prying and shrewd inquisitiveness of the mouse-like eyes. But could it be that, in so short a time,

Mme. Ravaut had so far forgotten the proud and dignified character of the man who had been for nearly twenty years her husband, as to think that he would use children as spies upon their mother ! True, it is not easy to be indifferent to an existence that has long been united to yours, whose daily joys and sorrows have found an echo in your heart. Only Régis de Fagan bent all his will to forget, he avoided uttering even the name of his former wife, and the girls observing the same discreet reserve, this broke with periods of coldness, of silence, with gaps, as they say in the theatre, the animated promenade through the apartment.

In the bedroom, for instance, Rose and Ninette could not repress a cry of surprise at sight of the little iron bedstead—a real student's bedstead, without curtains or hangings, and the two girls looked at each other with the same thought in their minds, the same recollections of Christmas and New Year's mornings, when they came, entangling their feet in their long nightgowns, still giddy with sleep, to creep into bed with mamma and papa, to exchange kisses and presents with them. The eyes of Rose and Ninette expressed many other thoughts on finding again at the head of the paternal bedstead portraits which had disappeared

from the conjugal chamber at the Rue Lafitte, and which the father had taken with him on going away. First, the large aquarelle of Besnard, in which they were represented at the ages of six and ten, holding each other by the hand, buried in the muslin bonnet and the high English sleeves of their Greenaway costumes; then the portrait of their father's grandmamma, a pastel under glass in an oval frame, that grandmamma whom they had never seen, and of whom their mother had always spoken to them as being a very; oh! a very severe woman indeed.

How many reflections pass through those young minds; what a confusion of all their ideas, both

of persons and of things once united, now scattered, as on the day after a fire or a shipwreck. And how perplexing, how terrifying for them is it all, in that absence of judgment which characterizes and signifies extreme youth! Happily, they were just then going into the dining-room, through whose open windows entered a flood of sunshine and all the odours of the garden. The table was laid, coquettish, appetizing, a bouquet at the place of each of the young girls, this latter being an attention of Mme. Hulin.

“Mme. Hulin?” asked Ninette, whose little round eyes immediately sparkled with curiosity.

“My landlady—she lives on the

ground-floor, and rents the first storey, in order to feel less alone in the house, for she is a widow, and she lives with her little boy and an old housekeeper."

"A flirt for papa," said Rose thoughtlessly, going to arrange her curls before a little hand-glass.

De Fagan looked at her sadly. "One of those silly remarks such as her mother used to make," he thought. Yet of her two daughters, Rose was the one who, physically, least resembled Mme. Ravaut; with her tall figure, slightly stooped, her dark Creole complexion, the serious and sentimental expression of her features, she reproduced her father's type.

Then, in a tone of gentle reproach, he said :

“I have hardly the heart to flirt, my dear child, and I am very sure poor Mme. Hulin thinks as little about flirting as I do ; but she is a very affectionate mother, and knowing that my daughters were coming here this morning she gathered these flowers for them.”

The servant, bringing in the first dish—eggs beaten up with mushrooms, for which Ninette had a passion—was received with a cry of joy.

“ See, there is Anthyme ! Good morning, Anthyme.”

He had served in the house of the Fagans for many years, and

reddening, he, too, excited by the novelty of the situation, stammered :

“ A very good morning, young ladies.”

He was a native of Beauce, absolutely uncultured, with hair combed straight over a finger's breadth of forehead ; it seemed as if the whole top of his head, with all its contents, had been cut clean off. His unequalled stupidity exasperated Madame ; and Régis, at the time of the divorce, had taken him with him, perhaps because of this antipathy, perhaps, also, because, Anthyme having kept up intercourse with the kitchen of the Rue Lafitte, he would be able to obtain news every day. The

sight of this familiar face, in all its rusticity, made the breakfast more cordial and friendly for the two girls. And what a marvel; this breakfast, of which each dish had been planned and discussed between Fagan and his domestic, to decide whether Mlle. Rose liked sugar in green pease, whether Nina preferred cream with chocolate or vanilla.

Intoxicated by the enjoyment of the pleasant breakfast, by their new spring toilets, the girls grew animated, forgetting, in delightful chat, the maternal charges—especially Rose, the elder, to whom Ninette made discreet and repeated signs. Fagan thus learned, without seeking the information,

that on last Friday Cousin had taken them to the Opéra-Comique. And yet this cousin was one of the interdicted names, but Rose was unable to restrain herself. Then, to avoid those involuntary indiscretions, which would cost them reprimands when they returned home in the evening, the father began to talk to them of other things: of their convent—which they could almost see from the window of the dining-room--of those beautiful gardens of the Assumption where they had spent so many happy years. Did they not regret it a little? Would they not like to return to it?

“Oh, no, indeed!” responded both, in the same breath.

“And why not, my darlings? You used to be so glad to return to it formerly.”

They hesitated to answer, to tell him what he divined so well. Since their parents' divorce, the house had not been the same for them. Living in the midst of perpetual disputes, in which propriety was no longer regarded, in which they were sometimes even obliged to take part: “You hear, my children, you hear how your father speaks to me!” “Madame, you forget yourself in the presence of your daughters!” They had been placed in the convent to spare them these painful scenes. But the divorce being decreed and the father having left

the house, the mother had hastened to recall them to her side, suddenly seized by an access of affection little in keeping with her hard and capricious nature. She seemed desirous of winning over her daughters ; Mademoiselle also softened the harshness and severity of her rôle of duenna and instructress.

This transformation manifested itself agreeably even in the children's toilets. Hitherto the mother had paid attention only to her own, sacrificing to it all the time and money that were necessary. But as soon as Fagan saw those two charming fashion-plates come into his house, instead of the two little lay sisters, with

smoothly combed hair, dressed in plain uniform, who came home from the Assumption on Saturday evenings, he comprehended that this mother—so little motherly before—was now going to become extravagantly so and flatter and spoil her daughters, not through the blindness of affection, but through a base jealousy, a desire to torment, or to torture, her former husband. He saw, too, a succession of mortifications, a war of pin-pricks; but to what end torment himself now? Had he not his daughters near him, close to him? and until evening? After breakfast he was to take them to a *matinée* at the Théâtre Français, where they were playing one of his

pieces which the girls had not yet seen. And think what joy, what pride, to hear, from a beautiful proscenium box, the best actors of Paris play before a crowded house a piece of which your father is the author! This was an entertainment which *Mme. Ravaut*, even with the collaboration of *Mlle.* *Moiselle*, could not give them. After the theatre a drive in the Bois, and a dinner at a fashionable restaurant—another pleasure which their mother could not give them, unless accompanied by “Cousin!” Oh, the delight of ordering one’s self from the waiter extraordinary dishes, and hearing them whisper at the neighbouring tables, with that interest which Parisians take

in the man *en vedette*, “ Régis de Fagan and his two daughters.” Then, at nightfall, to return, sitting close beside their father, through the odorous and deserted drives of the Bois, by cool and misty lakes, to Passy and the Boulevard Beauséjour, where Mademoiselle and the carriage would be waiting for them—that was what might be called a delightful day !

The programme laid before them, of all these delights, added to the animation of the breakfast, reddened with a pretty glow the cheeks of these wan little Parisians. Through the open window entered the odours of lilies of the valley and roses. Near by a blackbird was singing loudly in the top of a

tall old elm ; and Ninette approaching the window to try to discover it among the branches, a clear childish voice called to her from the lawn below :

“ Come down and play with me, say, won’t you ? ”

It was Maurice Hulin, a charming little boy of nine or ten, with a complexion like a camellia and long curls of a henna red, who, his knee having been injured, hopped around with the help of a little crutch. Mme. Hulin, who was sitting reading near her child, raised her head and said, “ Excuse him,” and “ Thanks,” with a smiling and still youthful and handsome mouth.

“ Don’t forget that we are going

to the Français, Ninette," cried the elder sister, as if annoyed at seeing Nina so ready to make a new acquaintance. The girl had already left the room, and did not hear her.

"Shall we go down, too?" asked the father; "you will see that she is a very charming woman."

But Rose refused positively. She did not know those people! And in the young girl's intonation, as she leaned her elbow on the window-sill beside her father, there was perceptible a nascent antipathy toward Mme. Hulin, an antipathy perceptible also in the critical look with which she examined the dress, the costume, of the woman seated on the lawn.

Her dress was very simple, a gown of half-mourning, scarcely brightened by the garden hat, trimmed with white lace and a mauve bow, a mauve the colour of the iris blooming on the lawn.

II.

AN intimacy arising from the similarity of their situations, an as yet inexplicable sympathy, had sprung up between the dramatist and his neighbour. They had been spending the evening alone together in the little parlour on the ground-floor; the little boy in bed, the hum of the city in the distance, the silence of the solitary boulevard broken only by the barking of some watchdog, or the quick passing of some train shaking the house to its foundations,

Suddenly the antique clock, an heirloom in the family, that harmonized with the console and the chairs of the time of the Empire, struck ten, and Mme. Hulin laughed softly, as she bit off the thread of her embroidery with her white teeth.

“What are you laughing at?” asked Régis, with that feeling of disquiet which a man always experiences in the presence of the feminine enigma, and which he is apt to be betrayed into showing by that involuntary raillery which is a trace of the mischievousness of childhood that even the most sensible woman retains.

“I am laughing,” she said, “because it is ten o’clock, and

you are not going out to-night, either ; which, for Régis de Fagan, is a strange thing indeed ! ”

Fagan smiled in his turn.

“ Why, what idea have you of an artist’s life ? ” he said. “ Do you suppose that we are all inveterate pleasure-seekers, revellers who turn ‘ night into day ’ ? ”

Pauline Hulin hesitated for a moment, and then said :

“ I am thinking of your green-room, so full of snares and temptations—— If I had married one of you I should have been very uneasy.”

“ Uneasy ? And what about ? The actresses ? Ah, well—— ”

And De Fagan, a dramatist, and with a thorough knowledge of the

subject, proceeded to analyse the artificial and manufactured side of those bizarre persons, with their ready-made phrases, their borrowed sentiments, possessed, as they are, by the sounding periods of the pieces they have played, and whose intonation they preserve in daily life, like mechanical talking dolls. “Actresses ! Why, if by accident they should strike a note of real passion, utter an ‘I love you’ not learned in the Conservatoire, they at once think, ‘How well I have said it !’ and they keep it to give the public in the next comedy of manners. And such good comrades, who hold their hearts in their hands, can refuse nothing to their little friends. You should be

— — —
behind the scenes of a theatre when actors are by themselves, when neither author nor manager is present ; you should hear what they call out to each other from one dressing-room to another—a circus caravan, the interior of a real *roulette*. Unless he were very young, indeed, what reputable man would seek his mental food there ? ”

Mme. Hulin, who, although apparently absorbed in the work spread on her knee, had listened attentively, replied in her usual calm tones :

“ I forgive you the actress, although you evidently exaggerate a little ; but for the famous man, the successful author, how many other temptations there are !

The admiration of women of fashion, *bonnes fortunes* of the post-office box, all the flatteries you receive from unknown correspondents who worship you from afar."

"Oh, that sort of woman is not very seductive or very dangerous either," said Régis. "In the first place, it is always the same ones who write; half a dozen hysterical women or foreigners collecting autographs. I have proved it twenty times in the case of friends, fellow men-of-letters; their unknown admirers were always mine."

Pauline raised her head: "And yet it may very well happen," she said, "that the woman who leaves

the theatre deeply moved by a beautiful play, by a fine recitation, may be tempted to thank the author."

"She may write, perhaps; but if she has any delicacy she will not send the letter. I defy you to contradict me, if you consider the matter well."

"Oh! as for me, I am not effusive."

A moan from the child interrupted her, and drew her into the adjoining room; returning, tranquillised, to her work-table, she said, lowering her voice, "He is restless to-night."

In the same low tone, which gave their conversation a more familiar air, Régis resumed:

“ So, then, you thought me a vagabond, and a pleasure-lover ; undeceive yourself. The life I am leading now is the life I dreamed of leading when I should marry, and what my wife most found fault with in me was my dislike to going out in the evening, my fondness for staying at home. This was her first complaint, the cause of our first disagreement. Whose was the fault ? I marry at twenty-eight, familiar with every stage situation, sated with all the pleasures that the theatre can offer, and I chance upon a woman wild for first nights, for benefits, for author’s passes. I had been told of a grandfather Ravaut, who had made a fortune by

manufacturing and hiring out theatrical costumes; and perhaps this ancestral connection with tinsel, with spangles, with wigs, with flowered waistcoats, affected that poor little brain. You see the misconception—the man has married to escape an artificial life, to make a home which shall not be the Français or the Opéra-Comique; the wife, on the contrary, has sought only a name that shall be constantly before the public, the opportunity to be present at all the dress rehearsals, and to be mentioned on the first page of the newspapers.”

“A cruel misconception, indeed,” said Mme. Hulin, but without conviction. There was

something in her truthful voice, in her frank countenance, expressive of doubt.

Fagan, who understood her well, continued, in order to convince her :

“ I was the one to give way, as being the one most in love, for I was desperately in love, and not, like her, with a newspaper reputation, or a senseless notoriety. Every evening, for years, I was dragged to the most varied spectacles ; we formed a part of that hideous All-Paris which shows itself everywhere, much more of a player than the players themselves, and for whom there is never a respite. At the first nights of all the theatres, we

figured invariably in the same places; I saw the heads of the critics in the orchestra grow bald, the wrinkles deepen on the faces of my neighbours or my *vis-a-vis*, always the same also. I listened to my wife saying: 'See, Mme. X—— has changed the strings of her pink hat to make people think it 'new'; or, 'Look at the Z——'s, how old they have grown!' Then, between the acts, never growing weary, scanning the audience through her opera-glass, she would enumerate the well-known names, recount all the little incidents, all the petty scandals that Paris repeats for a whole winter, which add piquancy to its amusements, and give them their

keenest zest. I led this existence of a provincial Jacquemart long enough to grow weary and sick of it at last, and there, in truth, is the real cause of our divorce."

"I have heard a certain story, however——" began Mme. Hulin, with an incredulous shake of the head.

"Ah! yes; the story of the Hôtel d'Espagne, related in all the papers. Confess that that is what has given you your bad opinion of me. But what if I tell you that the affair was all arranged beforehand with my wife?"

Pauline looked amazed; he continued:

"Three persons only, up to the present moment, are in the secret

of this comedy—the former Mme. de Fagan, myself, and Councillor de Malville—you know him?” he asked, in response to a gesture of Mme. Hulin’s, who nodded in the affirmative; and, without a pause, he related his conjugal adventure:

“More tired of each other than we were it would be impossible for either of us to be. ‘We must have some tangible fact,’ said De Malville, an enthusiastic amateur musician, as they read over together at the piano the latest score of Wagner; ‘furnish me with a scandal, a positive proof, and I will undertake your affair.’ Perhaps, without going very far to seek it, I might have found in the relations between Mme. de Fagan

and her cousin, La Posterolle, the proof the Councillor required; but two reasons prevented me from doing this. First, the facility with which I had allowed this cousin, a young master of requests of the Council of State, to become intimate in the family; I myself authorising him to accompany my daughters to the theatre and to social entertainments, on account of my dislike of leaving the house, my disinclination for social pleasures. Then the other, the true motive—our two daughters, their marriage, their future—the sole purpose of my life thenceforward. When it is the man who is in fault the world pardons; when it is the woman, the dishonour is reflected

upon the family. The children share it, are branded by it for ever. Now you see why I was willing to appear to be the guilty party, and to allow myself to be surprised in the circumstances you know."

"And M. de Malville lent himself to this farce?" cried Mme. Hulin, indignantly.

"I see, Madame, that you know very little about this symphonist who got into the magistracy by mistake. All that is not Beethoven or Wagner is absolutely indifferent to him. He was very obliging, however, for the affair was as troublesome for him as it was for us. Either the commissary who had been notified did not

arrive in time, or my accomplice—for I must have an accomplice—failed to keep the appointment. Then everything had to be begun over again; and can anything more ridiculous be imagined than a lawfully wedded pair appointing a meeting at the other end of Paris to arrange anew the day and the hour when I was to be surprised? We had chosen the Avenue de l'Observatoire, the upper part, where the shadow of the chest-nuts falls coolest and thickest. There was no danger of being seen by any one so far away, and our meeting was indispensable. Think of the absurdity of people who are suing each other for a divorce walking side by side, concerting

and planning their deliverance. For me, who am always looking for novel situations, that was one, truly! ‘Monday without fail, Hôtel d’Espagne, and don’t let your princess disappoint us!’ cried my wife, after parting from me with a hearty hand-shake. And I, no less cordial and resolute, ‘Monday, my dear, it is agreed!’ It was, in fact, on the following morning that the commissary surprised me——”

“With Amy Féral, of the Vaudeville,” said Mme. Hulin, forcing a smile.

“In consequence of this adventure, I was condemned to pay Mme. Fagan a monthly allowance of 1,500 francs and to leave her

my daughters, with the condition that they should be allowed to spend every alternate Sunday with me. It is hard, but I am convinced that the mother will, before long, soften this latter clause and will send me my daughters oftener, as they grow older, and whenever she may wish to disembarrass herself of their presence.” •

“Ah ! say no more to me about divorce ; it is a vile farce !” said Mme. Hulin, laying down the work which her hands, that had grown trembling and nervous, could scarcely hold.

“I owe my happiness to it, however. It has freed me from the most abominable creature——”

“Oh, M. de Fagan ! to speak

thus of a person whose only crime was not to have comprehended you fully. A want of mutual understanding, incompatibility of temper."

"More than that, Madame, much more. I have often told you how greatly I admired in you your uprightness, your sincerity in word and look. Well! what exasperated me in that woman was her falseness—falseness through inclination, through instinct, *chic*, and vanity; a falseness that entered into her dress, into the intonations of her voice; a fatal alloy which was so well amalgamated with all her acts that I could no longer distinguish the true from the false. 'Why are you laughing so

heartily?' I once asked her, in the room of the restaurant where we were supping after the opera. 'To make our neighbours believe that we are enjoying ourselves immensely,' she answered. All her nature is there. I do not remember ever to have heard her speak for the person she was addressing, but always for some one else: for the servant who was waiting on us, or some passer-by whose attention she wished to attract. Once, in the presence of a dozen people, she said to me suddenly with tears in her eyes and voice: 'Oh, my Régis! the Borromean Islands!' It was a few weeks after our marriage. We had not seen those islands,

we had never been there ; imagine my astonishment ! ”

Mme. Hulin still tried to make excuses : “ A harmless weakness, after all.”

“ Yes,” returned Fagan, “ but one that becomes so tiresome, so disconcerting ! To ask the companion of one’s life, ‘ Where have you been ? What have you been doing ? ’ and to know that not a word of what she answers is true ; that you will learn by some one of the thousand chance occurrences of Paris that she lies, and without necessity—with an obstinacy, a persistence, against which neither prayers nor experience avail. Oh ! her little sharp voice : ‘ But, I assure you—but, indeed—it is you

who deceive yourself or who are deceiving me!’ The worst of it was that with age, with the assurance which a woman acquires with years, the lies grew venomous, became dangerous to me and to others. Where her social enemies were concerned, her inventions, the wildest, the most abominable inventions, were so well put together that she ended by believing them herself. And she would relate them with a calm and reasonable air in which there was nothing to betray the neuropath she is but a little monotonous, mechanical movement—a twisting and pinching and curling of a ribbon, of the fold of a gown, between her finger and thumb kept up for hours at a

time. As society helps to disseminate the slanders it hears, the evil which an infernal creature like that may accomplish with impunity is incalculable. How many times, dining out, have I stooped down to watch my wife from behind the baskets of flowers and garlands of orchids! What is she saying? What is she inventing now? What poison is that little monster, so well dressed, with hair so becomingly arranged, pouring into her neighbour's ear? It was not long before I myself became her victim. Soon a story went the rounds of the *salons* of a Swede, a perverse creature of sixteen or seventeen, who had inspired me with a mad and criminal passion,

making me conceive a loathing and hatred for my wife and children. 'If I should die one of these days,' the exquisite person who bore my name said to her friends, 'if I should die you will know who has killed me.' "

Pauline Hulin uttered a cry of indignation. "Oh, that is frightful!" she said. •

"Yes, frightful. You should see the reception I met from my friends, the indirect advice, the grieved or indignant glances cast at us, at me. Defend myself? I did not even attempt it. Whom could I persuade that I knew no Swede, perverse or otherwise, and that all this conjugal drama was the work of an hysterical inagina-

tion? I resigned myself, then, and continued to wear, on first nights and in society, my sanguinary mask of Blue Beard, while the gentle victim beside me sighed and rolled her eyes, with a dying look. Her friends believed her to be so unhappy that, notwithstanding the prejudice of good society in Paris against divorce, they all advised her to sue for one. ‘No, no, I will endure to the end, to death, for the sake of my daughters!’ In reality, she, like me, had no supreme grievance, and but for De Malville’s advice——”

A cry from the child, louder than the first, interrupted their conversation again, drawing the mother abruptly out of the room ;

she soon returned, however, but very pale and with a trace of terror still in her beautiful eyes.

“What is the matter with him?” asked Fagan.

“Nothing, or almost nothing—a nightmare to which he is subject and from which he awakens in a fright, with that distressing cry of anguish.” •

Her poor little Maurice, so nervous, so frail! She began to talk about him, about his health, his injured knee——

“Has it been so since his birth?” asked De Fagan, greatly attracted by this maternal anxiety, the most profound, the most engrossing of all anxieties.

“No, it was caused by an acci-

dent—when he was very little.”
And she relapsed into silence,
absorbed in the painful recollec-
tion.

III.

“ No, my darlings ; no, my little girls, what you ask from me is impossible. Do not insist, you would make me too unhappy.” *

Insist ! They took good care not to insist. In the face of her father's refusal, Ninette had taken up a book, Rose a fashion magazine, and their ingenuous girlish faces, suddenly closed, hardened, as it were, assumed an expression of silent and absorbed attention, interrupted at times by a malicious and furtive glance darted from

under half-closed lids. It was no longer two children whom Fagan had before him, but two women, with that angelic obstinacy of women that drives a man to desperation. And he strove hard, the poor father, he made every possible effort to force into their stubborn little heads the well-grounded motives of his refusal—the refusal of a supplementary subsidy.

During the seven months that had passed since their mother and he had parted, had he once failed to give two thousand francs, instead of the fifteen hundred allowed by the court? And that was not enough; they dared to ask him for more when all the fortune he

possessed was the revenue he received from his plays. He did not complain this year, his repertory had continued in vogue; but this revenue might diminish through the caprice of the public. Then he had to think of Rose's dowry.

“And in short, my pets, I think, that, for a Sunday when you come to see your father, one of my poor Sundays, you have undertaken a very ugly commission. Could not Mademoiselle have been sent to me, or, better still, a letter, which I would have known how to answer?”

It required this direct attack, their mother brought into the dispute, to break the martyr-like silence of the young girls.

“ But, father,” said Ninette, without raising her eyes from her book, “ we have received no commission, and this little increase that we asked from you is for ourselves only.”

“ For our dresses,” added Mlle. Rose mildly, from behind the large fashion-plate that surrounded her like a screen.

Their dresses ! Fagan exclaimed. But the extra sum he gave every month was intended precisely for their dresses, not for those of Mme. Ravaut, assuredly ; and young girls of their age, of their station, ought to be satisfied with that. He entered into particulars as to the cost of gowns, of linen, of shoes ; unconsciously enacting again one of

those vexatious domestic scenes of former days, only that now he had to do with two women instead of one ; retorts followed, those of the younger clear and to the point, those of the elder even more irritating from the gentleness and apparent innocence with which they were uttered. Did she not suddenly call to her aid a marriage in their circle which would oblige them, doubtless——

“ What marriage ? ” said Fagan, straightening himself quickly.

Prompt as had been Ninette’s warning glance to her thoughtless elder sister, he had intercepted it, growing pale to the lips, to the very eyes ; and with a hard and strident voice he said : “ I under-

stand ; yes, yes, I understand perfectly. Mme. Ravaut is going to marry again—she has the right to do so ; and whom, may one know ? Her cousin, is it not ? ”

The burning cheeks of the girls, their evasive and embarrassed gestures, answered him more clearly than any words could have done and redoubled his anger. Not indeed that he was jealous of his former wife ; but of his daughters, oh ! he had in other days been jealous, to anguish, of their intimacy with this La Posterolle ; of the flatteries, the presents with which he had succeeded in winning their favour, in making himself the recipient of their pretty little attentions, coquettish and greedy little

parrots that they were. How would it be now when he should live in the same house with them, with the authority and the privileges of a stepfather, and soon, in the natural order of things, by his assiduity, by his continual presence, more like a father to them than he himself. The idea enraged him, especially when it occurred to him that his children might be taken out of Paris, away from him.

“Indeed! Indeed!” he cried, stammering with fury and agitating his long arms, his hands clenched threateningly.

But the anger of De Fagan was like a cyclone—violent, and of short duration. After throwing

down a few chairs, flinging open the door two or three times, as if with the intention of leaving the room, he calmed down, threw himself into a capacious easy-chair, and, as he did every fortnight, asked Rose to open the piano bought expressly for her.

Unfortunately Rose had a headache—oh, a very bad headache.

“Come, Rosette, just a little—a few bars of Chopin or Mendelssohn.”

“I am very sorry, father—impossible.”

And in face of the gloomy, implacable intonation the father did not insist; one does not argue with the headache. Turning to Ninette, he said :

“And you, are you not going to play with Maurice?”

“No, not to-day; I am too tired.”

Her book held tightly between her hands, her brows knit obstinately, her wilful chin bent over her boy's collar, one felt that neither the father's tender reproaches nor the imploring looks raised towards the window by the little lame boy, dragging his crutch along—sad and dull in the garden—nor anything else would soften her determination.

All day Fagan struggled thus against an ill-humour that was not caused by his daughters only, but that was also the work of her who was absent, invisible, and,

consequently, all the stronger. Was it, in truth, worth while to have got a divorce if he must endure the same domestic scenes as before, ending in a silence whose wearing persistence he well knew?

During this long and painful afternoon he wrote several letters to Mme. Ravaut, all of which he tore up as soon as they were written, as too moderate or too cutting. Finally, as the girls, after a very cold kiss, were going to join Mademoiselle, who was waiting for them outside, he gave Rose a few lines addressed to her mother asking for an interview on the following morning.

On the same Avenue de l'Ob-

servatoire where, some months before, they had planned their divorce, Fagan awaited his ex-wife, not without some curiosity. Often thinking of her in the solitary evenings, he had tried to picture her to himself; but, as he had retained no likeness of her, his memory at times confused the outlines of her face, magnifying some of them at the expense of the others. Her image was no longer in him.

When he caught sight of her in the distance, sweeping the dead leaves lying in the path with her brown skirt, she looked to him taller than he had thought her; and while she remarked with interest that he had grown fatter,

that his complexion was more even, more rosy, the delicate moustache and the hair, streaked with silver on the temples, lending it a softer tone, he was chiefly astonished by the effect which hair, passing from an undecided ashy blonde to the most Venetian red, can bestow on a feminine face—a warm glow like that of a beautiful Italian picture, making the eyes look darker, the skin clearer—a new beauty, retouched and heightened, completed, perhaps, by an invisible rouging.

The dress, perfect as always, was still further set off by that perfume of coquetry peculiar to the woman who loves and who wishes to be loved, and by a certain assured

and independent bearing which Mme. Ravaut, responsible for her actions to no one but herself for some months past, had acquired at the same time with her independence.

“Divorce agrees confoundedly well with her,” thought De Fagan, and he attacked the question at once, resolutely.

“Why did you not inform me of this marriage? Was it not agreed upon that you should do so?”

She exaggerated her pretty wily smile of former days, and her watchful look from under lids half-raised, like the “spies” of the windows of Berne.

Good Heavens! nothing had been decided upon yet—she hesi-

tated still. Did he think it advisable? "You know me, my little Fagan; you know La Posterolle—what would you advise?"

She spoke in a tone of sincere friendliness; and as she walked along beside him on the sidewalk of the Avenue, she instinctively went to take his arm. But by a movement, almost involuntary also, De Fagan drew back and, to avoid questions which he thought out of place and inopportune, he reminded her of the conditions of their divorce—never to leave Paris, never to take the children away from Paris. His voice trembled under his blonde moustache as he uttered the words.

She reassured him quickly. His

daughters quit Paris? Certainly not with their mother, nor because of this marriage. La Posterolle, at present master of requests in the Council of State and soon to be made a councillor, had all his interests in Paris. She herself was far too much of a Parisian—and this tranquillised Fagan more than anything else. He could not, indeed, imagine her living in a province, exiled from first nights, from the hippodrome, from exhibitions of all sorts, to which one goes to see or to be seen. And as she returned to her La Posterolle, to the advantages of the projected marriage, he listened to her without displeasure, almost gave her his advice.

But the rain which had been threatening all the morning began to fall—the fine, penetrating autumn rain. Great clouds gathered above the Luxembourg. They opened their umbrellas, but after a moment, too far away from him for conversation, she closed hers and walked close behind him, talking to him of their daughters. Her new position, if she decided upon taking it, would procure them acquaintances in official circles, advantageous *partis*. The elder was just sixteen. What could a woman, alone, divorced, hampered both in visiting and receiving, do to marry her? Rose and Ninette, in the end, might suffer from this isolation. “But you your-

self, Régis, are you not very lonely ? ”

All this she said in a low voice, pressing close to him to shelter herself from the shower, which had become heavier. A fine mist enveloped the Avenue, its russet-leaved trees and the fine group of Carpeaux—a terrestrial globe sustained in revolving motion by five female figures in bronze, with slender and vigorous limbs. At times a couple, driven away by the rain, would rise from some bench and pass close by them with a sly and knowing smile ; for how was it possible to conceive the purpose that had brought them here, the relations they bore to each other ?

And gradually the mildness of this autumn morning, the novelty of a conversation which he was already thinking vaguely of for a play, rendered Fagan attentive to this voice, which he knew, notwithstanding, to be wily and false. After having said: "Advise me," it was she who advised him, and so wisely! urging him to marry, also; not to end his days in abandonment; acknowledging that he would make an excellent husband for a woman more in conformity with his tastes and his ideas. Amused at the turn the conversation had taken, he was about to answer amiably, almost gaily, when she interrupted him: "What a pity that Mme. Hulin——"

“Mme. Hulin?”

“Yes, your landlady.”

Again the corners of her mouth quivered, with a touch of malice. He started.

“You know her, then?” he said.

“Enough to know that she is precisely the type that would suit you.”

“Then, what does ‘what a pity’ mean?”

“Eh, yes! What a pity that she is not a widow.” And seeing his amazed look, she answered: “You told the children that she was a widow; she is merely separated from her husband.”

“How do you know anything about it?”

“ My police ! ”

She laughed so maliciously that he shrugged his shoulders as if to dismiss, as of little consequence, the subject of Mme. Hulin and her widowhood. They walked on for awhile in silence, but the rain, which had increased, and the noisy exit of the students of a fencing school, who jostled and pushed one another and filled the deserted Avenue with shouts of laughter, putting an end definitely to the charm of the early part of the rendezvous, they separated at the next cab-stand.

Why did he return home, his heart oppressed by this interview? He had the certainty that his daughters would not leave Paris,

that this marriage would in no way change his existence, so calm and so happy. Was it because memories of the past, vague regrets stirred within him at the rejuvenation of this blonde become a *rousse*, at this perfume of vervain that he had so long loved? No, a thousand times no! The first surprise passed, the crafty smile had sufficed to recall to him years of weariness and suffering. Then, what was the anguish that stifled him? After a thousand evasions and subterfuges he was compelled to acknowledge to himself that his sadness came from the knowledge that his friend was married. And, in his imagination, far, far away as at the end of a long avenue,

appeared Pauline Hulin, with her rather short figure, her large, well-opened, magnetic eyes, and that air of loyalty, of tranquillising goodness, that characterised her, enveloping her whole being, forming so complete a contrast to the woman he had just left! It was clear that, without his having suspected it, hopes, vague as yet, had been taking shape in his heart for some time past, which the revelation, coming like a thunderclap, "Mme. Hulin has a husband!" had destroyed.

In the first place, was it true? Was it not of those romantic stories that the delightful Mme. Ravaut was in the habit of inventing? Thinking it over, how-

ever, his neighbour's strange reticence on the subject of her husband, defunct or not, when on so many other points there was such perfect confidence between them, and certain words dropped by little Maurice, had often given him food for thought. But what could be the purpose of a lie which would take away from this being the frank sincerity that was one of her chief attractions? And he gave her his confidence so unreservedly! Were all women, then, liars? Were none of them to be believed? Was there no more value to be attached to the word of any of them than to the testimony of a child in court?

His mind in a whirl of furious

and contradictory thoughts, he reached home fully determined upon an immediate explanation, but he was informed that the child's knee having been inflamed for some days past, Mine. Hulin had called in a great surgeon, and that at this very moment a consultation was taking place.

After he had breakfasted, Fagan went downstairs to make inquiries. He was not received. In the doorway Annette, the woman who had been the child's nurse, told him with red eyes that a very serious operation, to take place to-morrow, had just been decided upon; that they were all engaged in making the necessary preparations, and that her mistress could

see no one. He then sent to inquire whether he could be of any service on the following day—to hold the child, or to watch him. Madame sent back word that she thanked Monsieur very much, but that she needed nothing.

How far she was from him at this moment, this charming woman! When her child was in danger how small a place he occupied in the heart of the mother!

IV.

IF Régis de Fagan had had any doubt of his love for Pauline Hulin, the state of feverish anxiety in which the operation on little Maurice kept him during the whole of the following morning would have dispelled it. The affectionate and languid grace of the delicate child, his adorable sayings—those sayings that occur to children that might almost make one fancy they had come from some magical planet where language is simple but wisdom precocious—all this, with-

out the image of the mother—the mother's grief, which were present to him during the whole time, would not have caused him the strong and deep emotion which agitated him more and more as the danger appeared to become more imminent.

At times, to divert his anxiety, he would stand looking through the window and drumming mechanically on the glass; and on one of these occasions, when an autumnal blast was driving the clouds before it and twisting the old elms of the garden, making them creak and bend like the masts of a ship, he perceived, in one of the walks, a man of from thirty-five to forty, short and

stout, with a fiery red complexion and a bristling moustache, his form clad in a military coat, and who appeared, like himself, restless and expectant, watching with anxious looks the lofty chamber on the ground-floor in which the surgeons were at work.

Was it one of those anxious glances, which Régis intercepted, or was it the aspect of the man—bareheaded, notwithstanding the storm—his air of being in his own house, that made De Fagan suddenly say to himself: “That is the father, that is the husband,” and he no longer had a doubt that such was the case when Mme. Hulin, in a long dressing-gown, her hair in disorder, sprang down

the four steps of the *perron* at a bound and ran up to the man with a radiant face. She spoke to him rapidly, informing him, no doubt, that the operation had been successfully performed, and while speaking she raised her hands to her head to fasten up the loosened curls of her hair. Then, with a passionate gesture, the man tried to clasp the round and supple waist, left free by the womanly action; but she evaded him, cried two or three times, "No! no!" at the same time shaking her head angrily, and ran toward the house without once looking behind her.

Oh, yes, the husband, undoubtedly, and from the manner in which he had tried to embrace

her, a husband still young, it was evident, and as enamoured as on his wedding-day. And Fagan could not get this thought out of his head. While Anthyme was waiting on him, he tried to obtain some information, but the other, as usual, was unable to answer. Red hair? A bristly moustache? No, he had heard nothing about any such person. But the minutest details of the operation, the number of probes and sponges employed, the fear they had had for a moment that the chloroform would give out, and, when all the others lost their heads, the calmness of the mother, who kept up the courage of every one around her—of all this Anthyme was never done

— — — — —
talking. All the same, if Monsieur wished, he had only to ask Annette or the cook.

“I forbid you to do so, wretch !” said Fagan, terrified at the thought of the fathomless abysses into which this imbecile might plunge him. Then, shutting up in his own breast his reflections and his sorrows, he went to the Vaudeville, where his piece was being rehearsed, and great was his joy, on entering a carriage at the station at Passy, to see the individual whom he already called the husband, climb up to the imperial of the tramway with the agility of a young man. He was not going to spend the afternoon, then, at Mme. Hulin’s. Thus it was that the

actors of the Vaudeville said to each other at the rehearsal : “ Our author is in a good-humour to-day,” and Régis, as much interested by his prose as if it were altogether new to him, thought, in the *guignol* of the proscenium box, “ My actors are playing like angels.”

But what a disappointment, when, on his return, Anthyme said to him, proud and happy to have obtained the information : “ Apropos, that person Monsieur was inquiring about, who was walking bareheaded in the garden——”

“ Yes, well ? ”

“ He must be some near relation of Mme. Hulin’s, for he has just returned and he is going to dine here. I shouldn’t be surprised if

he were even to sleep here, because Annette——”

“ Eh ! And how do you suppose it concerns me whether the man dines and sleeps here or not ? ”

Poor Fagan ! It concerned him so little that he could not touch his dinner, and that during the whole evening, still unable to work or even to read, he had but one thought : “ Will the man remain here to-night ? ” And if he remained, how suppose that the husband of this beautiful and radiant creature—for Fagan no longer doubted that he was the husband—could watch quietly beside her, and that she herself, in the joy of seeing the operation performed, her child saved, would

not forgive the father all his faults ?

And he turned pale with anger, he who had heard with such calmness of the approaching marriage of his wife to La Posterolle. But he no longer loved his wife, and he adored Mme. Hulin. There now remained no doubt of this.

• What, then, ought he to do ? Remain in this house ? Keep up their intimacy ? He would be too miserable ; the violent beating of his heart was sufficient proof of this. He must go away, then, leave this little house, so quiet, so well adapted for his work, with its long evenings, and to which the neighbourhood of the mother and the child lent it a gentle animation.

He was diverted from his reflections by an unaccustomed commotion downstairs, hurried steps, a dispute carried on in low tones, then the ringing of a bell and the noise of a struggle, accompanied by the overturning of pieces of furniture and the angry imprecations of a man. Fagan, who had risen to his feet at the first sound, rushed to the stairs, his heart quaking. Almost at the same instant a door below opened, the man went out furious, lighted by Annette, whose hands trembled as she held the lamp. On the threshold he turned round, shook his clenched hands menacingly, pouring forth a volley of frightful abuse, and rushed into the street,

slamming the door violently, which the maid bolted and chained with the greatest care behind him.

Fagan stood motionless on the stairs, a mute witness of this scene, asking himself what course he ought to take; then, obeying an irresistible impulse, he sprang down the steps and went to the parlour where Mme. Hulin sat, half-fainting, on the edge of a sofa, her hair in disorder, a look of terror in her eyes, as yet powerless to control the agitation into which the recent scene had thrown her. The fitful blaze of a large wood fire lighted up her form at intervals.

“Come in, come in,” she said, holding her hands to him—hands

that trembled and were cold as ice.

“ You called,” he murmured ;
“ I am here.”

And she, in a still lower voice, answered, “ Oh, yes ! I was terribly afraid ! ”

Not wishing to embarrass her by indiscreet questions he contented himself with saying, “ How is Maurice ? ”

“ He is asleep, he is asleep, the dear child ; fortunately he did not waken, they gave him so much chloroform ! ”

“ Then the operation was successful ? ”

“ Beyond all expectation.”

Annette re-entered the room, flooding the parlour with the cheer-

ful light of her lamp. "There is no fear of his coming back," she said; "I have put on the chain and the bolt." Then perceiving their neighbour, she added: "Oh, M. de Fagan! then we need have no uneasiness."

When she left the room Pauline Hulin drew her chair toward the table, made a sign to Fagan to seat himself at the other side, and having recovered her self-possession, and hastily arranged her loosened hair and the modest folds of her woollen dressing-gown, trimmed with fleecy lace, she said: "You would never guess who that man is—that man who just left the house."

"Your husband, I suppose?"

“ You knew it ? ”

“ But I should have preferred to have learned it from you.”

“ Listen to me,” she said.

And in the same spot, with the same barking of the watchdogs in the distance, the same rumbling noise of the suburban trains, in this dear little parlour in which he had related to her his marital sorrows, Fagan now listened to hers.

Married at Havre, ten years before, to a naval commissary, she had been obliged only four years afterward to seek a separation from him ; and what patience had it not required to live for even those four years with such a man ! Not bad, indeed ; neither a

drunkard nor a gambler, like so many others around him who led the dissipated life usual in seaport towns; but so jealous, so brutal, so violent in the fits of passion which were of daily occurrence, and which nothing could moderate or prevent, not even the precautions of the most discreet, the least coquettish of women. If she danced at a ball there was a scene on their return, and what a scene! On account of her dress, though it was always inspected by him before they left the house—the fichu must reach to the chin, the sleeves to the elbow; on account of her manners, her way of waltzing, of saluting. If she did not dance, another quarrel. So that

people ridiculed him and called him a Bartholo, while he himself posed as a victim on the benches among the hangings.

Ah! with what anguish the poor woman looked forward to the official fêtes to which her husband dragged her. And this surveillance he exercised over her not only when they went out in the evening; in the daytime she must give him an account of the visits she made, and in their exact order, with every detail, even to the names of all the people whom she had met. This control extended even to her inmost being, the hidden retreat of thoughts and feelings. "What are you thinking of? quick! tell me." It extended even to her

sleep. For she was obliged to relate to him her dreams on awakening, at the risk of making him furious if he had not figured in them, for she would not have known how to lie.

During the four years that she had lived with this man she could not remember a single night passed without tears, without shouts, abusive words, and acts of violence in which the unhappy man would give way to his frenzy, to grovel afterward at her feet, sobbing and begging her forgiveness.

“ I forgave for four years ; and, perhaps, through pride, through pity or through shame, as well as for the sake of our child, I should still have continued to endure, but

one evening" — here her voice became stern and hard, like the voice of another woman—"one evening the wretch, in one of his fits of anger, ended everything by expressing a doubt that our little Maurice was his son, tore the child from my arms, and threw him with such violence upon the floor— Ah, my poor little one!

"From that day forth it was in vain that he entreated, wept, threatened to kill himself and me also. I ceased to be his wife, I demanded a separation, and I obtained it. Leaving Havre immediately, I came to Paris to live with my widowed mother, who for several years before had resided in

this house. It was to please her, and by her advice, that I too allowed myself to pass for a widow in the neighbourhood and among our acquaintances. The old society of Paris retains a prejudice to, a distrust of, the woman who is separated from her husband; more especially when there is nothing to indicate—unless special inquiry be made—in whose favour the decree of separation has been granted. My dear mother considered that this precaution would be of advantage to me, when she would be no more, and I should be left alone. And certainly, on several occasions my pseudo-widowhood has proved to be of service to me——”

Fagan shook his head as if in protest; and, coming straight to the point that tormented him, said: "You have not availed yourself then of the privileges accorded you by the law, since your husband has returned to your house?"

"He returned to it for the first time to-day," responded Mme. Hulin with a limpid glance. "Annette writes to him the first day of every year, to give him news of us; but until this morning, we have never met since our separation. And I sent for him less on account of the operation, which was a serious one, than on account of a certain clause in our decree of separation. Yes, Councillor de Malville——"

“Malville? My wife’s Wagnerian?”

“The same; he was at that time president of the court at Havre, and a fanatic about music, like my husband. Both were members of the same quartette, so that, although he gave the decrec of separation in my favour—and, indeed, how could he have done otherwise?—he accorded the father the right of directing the education of the child, from the age of ten until the completion of his studies. Maurice is now almost ten, and the thought that I was about to lose him, that they would shut him up in some school, far away from me, wrung my heart. I sent for my husband with the

hope that he would have pity on the little martyr and still leave him in my charge after the time appointed. At first I thought I would succeed, seeing him so affected this morning that he would scarcely dare to kiss the child, who lay in a half-stupor, all pale from the chloroform. In the evening he came back, he wished to spend the night in the parlour to watch over our darling, he said, in case I should require to rest. He spoke so affectionately, swearing that he would leave me my son as long as I desired—his voice expressed so truly a father's affection, and nothing more, that we made a bed for him here as you see—I in the inner room at

the bedside of my little one, the door half open—and all at once the wretch, entering the room in which I was——

“I felt all my former hatred surge up within me, and I had the strength, I know not how, to repulse him, to drive him away, threatening to call all the household to my assistance. I solemnly swear that that man shall never approach either me or his child again ! ”

“As to you, the law authorises you ; but the child ? ”

“Before he shall be ten I have still three months. If his knee is not cured by the end of those three months I hope to obtain a respite from the court. If, on the con-

trary, he is cured, or if his father avails himself of the partiality of his friend Malville, I shall take my child and go hide myself with him in the remotest corner of the earth."

A silence full of emotion, a long silence, followed this threat of flight and of separation on which their thoughts seemed already to dwell painfully. Suddenly Régis de Fagan, as if thinking aloud, said :

"And why not obtain a divorce ? After the first decision in your favour nothing would be easier."

"And of what advantage would that be ? "

He became very pale.

"The advantage that you would

be able to marry again and find in the man who loved you the natural protector of Maurice and yourself."

"Marry again! Oh, I think I have had enough experience of marriage. Besides, all my family are strict Catholics, my dear mother called divorce a sacrilege, and I myself, brought up with her ideas——" She stopped abruptly, saying: "But, apropos of divorce, have you seen your wife? I forgot to ask you?"

"I have seen her."

"Without emotion?"

"Absolutely!"

"This is what divorce has made of marriage," murmured Pauline Hulin, who had coloured warmly

on hearing that Régis had met his wife without emotion. “ But she, are you quite sure that you produced no - impression on her? Her new projects, does she still entertain them ? ”

“ More than ever. Only that, as I have the certainty that my daughters will not leave Paris, I am delighted at a marriage which will separate this woman still further from me, which will render all future intercourse between us impossible. And you see how much better my position is than yours. If you were divorced Hulin would marry again, make another home, other ties for himself, and he would probably leave you both in peace.”

“ Yes, you are right,” she said pensively, “ you are right : but I shall never seek a divorce, never : it is impossible, impossible ! ”

V.

FOR some days past the posters of the Vaudeville had been announcing the near representation of Fagan's play. It was talked about in the theatres, in the clubs, at the "at homes" of the women who receive; in the ministerial offices, in the cafés of the boulevard, and already there had rained on the table of the popular author requests for seats for his first night in sufficient number; had they been complied

with, to have filled the house several times over.

One Sunday morning, when he was laughingly showing his daughters, who had just arrived, his mail, the extravagant number of solicitations, Ninette said quickly :

“Oh, father, you know that mamma would like to have a box for your dress rehearsal.”

“Willingly,” responded Fagan, his face darkening, as it always did when they spoke of their mother. “But on one condition—that you remain that evening with me and not with her.”

Rose, always a good daughter, was about to reply, “Nothing easier,” but she stopped at a

glance from her sister. At the same time Ninette, turning up her little nose, objected :

“But, dear father, you don’t consider that at every instant of the rehearsal you will be called upon the stage or behind the scenes, and that on those occasions we should be left alone.”

“I have thought of that,” responded Fagan. “We will take Mme. Hulin with us.”

“Mme. Hulin? Never while I live!”

Starting to her feet, almost voiceless, the features of Rose, the gentle and pretty Rose, as she uttered these words, were distorted with anger. No, not that, he must not expect that! Noth-

ing in the world would induce her to show herself in public with such a person !

Her father did not get angry ; he felt rather an inclination to smile, for he recognised his blood and his race and all his island in this tropical storm.

“ That person, as you call her, my dear child,” he replied, “ is a woman deserving of all respect, and I do not know by whom nor why you have been so prejudiced against her. Besides, how can you think—my big girl, my darling Rose—that your father would give you, in public or elsewhere, the companionship of a woman who was not modesty ~~itself~~ ? ”

Rose did not yield. "That may be so ; but I would rather—and so would my sister—stay away from the rehearsal than go to it with——"

He did not let her finish. "Very well, my children," he said. "The rehearsal will do without you. And since there is no reason why I should invite the future *Mme. La Posterolle*, pray tell her that she need not expect a box."

It was chiefly with the mother that he was displeased, convinced as he was that Rose's jealousy found in her a constant source of nourishment. And indeed, kept informed by Nina, whose ferret eyes, always on the watch, noted

carefully the progress of the intimacy between Fagan and his neighbour, Mme. Ravaut turned every circumstance to account. For instance, it was still necessary that Maurice should not be allowed to move. He had to be wheeled about, reclining in his little carriage—and Fagan often wheeled this carriage from the sanded square before the house to the shady circle under the tall trees; or to be carried in the arms, and this only Fagan could do, carefully holding the poor sick boy, grown taller during his illness, who, in his jersey with its white collar, his face very pale, would lean his blonde head on his big friend's shoulder. When Ninette

described these scenes, that indicated so close an intimacy, the mother, who knew the weaknesses of her two daughters, would turn to Mademoiselle, her constant confidante, and say, loud enough to be heard, "You will see that he will adopt that child, and that he will leave my poor little ones only what he can't take from them."

From that time forward, Ninette, already a very mercenary little person, cherished a hatred toward little Maurice, and showed it so plainly that the child no longer ventured to invite her to play with him, or even to raise his eyes to the window where he used to watch her formerly. With Rose, who with regard to pecuniary

matters was almost indifferent, she used other methods. Passionate under her apparent gentleness, and above all jealous, it enraged the young girl to think that a stranger should have as large a place in her father's heart as she herself had. One thing pleased her, however, in Mme. Hulin : her religious ideas, which prevented her from seeking a divorce although she had been unhappy in her marriage. The young girl, who had brought with her from the convent of the Assumption a strong religious feeling, thought this very proper, and said so in her mother's presence.

“ Oh, yes,” sneered Mme. Ravaut, and Mademoiselle, an

English Protestant, sneered with her, "we know what they are, those devotees; their religion prevents them from seeking a divorce, but that is all it does prevent."

And Mlle. Rose, a modern Parisian, at once innocent and well-informed, knew very well what her mother meant to imply by those words, and hence her indignation at being asked to sit in the same box with Mine. Hulin.

They had one more happy Sunday; one of those delightful Sundays when the father brought dainties from every corner of the city, trying to remember menus of delicate suppers in order to fête his daughters, and adorning the table with rare flowers, and enlivening

it with witty and sprightly talk for the entertainment of his darlings, with whom he was allowed so little intercourse.

This time he was angry with them, and this unusual anger seemed to justify the calumnies of Mme. Ravaut. His neighbour must indeed have acquired an influence over their father, generally so ready to submit, so easily conquered! He, on his side, looking at their ravishing costumes, framing furious little faces, recalled all his sacrifices, especially the latest, that increase in the allowance so generously given. And at the same time there came up from the garden the sound of the child's carriage-wheels rolling

over the sand, and the voice of the gentle and perfect Pauline Hulin, whose fears and sorrows he knew, and towards whom his daughters showed themselves so cruel.

For the first time since the institution of the fortnightly Sundays, De Fagan and his daughters not knowing how to spend the remainder of their day together, Anthyme drove Rose and Ninette home before the appointed hour.

“Will you have me to dinner?” the poor father asked Mme. Hulin, and when he had told her the motive of his quarrel with his children, instead of thanks he received only reproaches.

“How can you be so vexed with your daughters for being

jealous of your friendship for Maurice and me?" she said. "Why, my friend, nothing could be more natural. And in any case, I would ~~not~~ go to your rehearsal. How could I leave my little patient? Devoted as Annette is, could I trust him to her for a whole evening? And then, my heart is so full! I have so many troubles in prospect! Fancy that I am almost brought to wish that my child should remain lame. This is frightful; but if he is cured his father will come and take him from me. And you would have me go to the theatre to try to divert myself? Oh, no; keep your daughters with you in your box, and come and tell me, when

you return, if you are satisfied, if your piece has succeeded. I will wait up for you, I promise you."

As all her words were sincere, rising from the depths of her being with the calm and irresistible force of a deep sea wave, her friend believed and obeyed her in every point.

On the evening of the dress rehearsal, while Mme. Ravaut, accompanied by her fiancé, La Posterolle, and another friend, had one of the first proscenium boxes opened for her, as a woman accustomed to be present on these occasions, the author of the piece installed his two daughters, chaperoned by their Englishwoman, like a painted lay-figure, in a box in

the pit. The house had a weird appearance in the dim light, through which could be seen here and there, on the several tiers, groups of whispering shadows: critics, friends of the author, patrons of the theatre, dressmakers, seamstresses, dressers, while from time to time, through some half-open door, fluttered the pink ribbons of the workwomen passing through the brilliantly-lighted corridors.

“ Well! it is succeeding, I think? ” said De Fagan, thrusting forward between the faces of his two daughters, which were radiant, a face like that of a condemned criminal, his eyes dull, his lips pale as if this were his first piece.

“Succeeding? Just listen!” responded Ninette, without stopping in her applause, for the second act had just ended and all the groups scattered throughout the house had joined in a veritable ovation. There were tears in Rose’s limpid eyes, and above, Mme. Ravaut—the light of the balustrade falling full upon her, as she leaned far out of her box, without the least embarrassment at her false position—was beside herself with excitement; uttering cries of applause to which she kept time with the tapping of her fan. “Ah, very good! That is charming!” and giving such smiles of intelligence and approbation to the actors on the stage that one

might have imagined she was still the author's wife.

To be the author's wife, on the night of a success—that was something to flatter a woman's vanity! Assuredly her *La Posterolle* would never bestow a pleasure like this upon her—or her daughters. Thus thought Régis de Fagan, and his triumph would have been complete if he could have seen in the shadows of the box the reassuring smile, the tranquil grace of Pauline Hulin.

After the third act the piece, which had four acts altogether, had a steadily increasing success. Fagan, intoxicated with that joy which never palls, desired to make his daughters participate in it and,

through their vanity, give them a pleasure which they should never forget, and with the door of his box open he received in their presence his friends—petitioners, too, provincial managers, managers of travelling companies, foreign correspondents, eager to translate and transport to distant theatres the new work of the famous author. Between times came boxes of sweetmeats, flowers for the young ladies, and hands were extended, congratulations called out from the lobbies; while Rose and Ninette, absolutely dazed by their father's success, had their part also in all this homage—both so pretty and graceful yet so different in style, the younger with roguish

and laughing eyes, and a complexion like a wild rose, the elder languid and drooping, and with the dark pallor of a Creole.

“My daughters,” said Régis, proudly.

And seeing the two little Parisians dressed to perfection, all these frequenters of the boulevard, journalists, and speculators with the gambling temperament, said enviously among themselves: “With mascottes like those, it is not surprising that he should have good luck.”

Suddenly the enthusiastic group around the triumphant author parted to make way for a strikingly-dressed woman; it was Mme. Ravaut, who hurried for-

ward, with outstretched hands, to give Régis the manly grasp of a comrade. "Good! that was good! my little Fagan, very good!" Then, with a radiant smile at her daughters, she passed on, leaving every one stupefied at her act, so direct, so unexpected, and variously judged in the lobbies. Some saw in it a rash impulse, unreflecting enthusiasm, the love of art rising above the trammelling conventionalities; others, and Régis among them, recognized in it the act of one of that vain and worldly set who are always seeking notoriety, wanting to be at the front of everything at all cost, and who make for themselves a rôle in any

performance in which they have no legitimate part.

“ ‘ Good ! that was good ! my little Fagan ! ’ ” He laughed to himself at the words, as, after having put his daughters and their governess into the carriage, he was returning on foot to his distant lodging, in order to calm his feverish excitement in the cold air of the clear winter’s night.

In contrast, the remembrance came back to him of homeward walks on certain nights when his piece had not succeeded. How angry she had been with him then ! With what a malicious laugh she had jeered at the work and the author ! And her contemptuous shrugs at the hopes

he still cherished ! Then, in the morning, when the newspapers came, how, among all the multitude of well-informed, carping, or treacherous articles, she would go straight to the worst, to point out to him the cutting line, the wounding passage. Ah, what a companion for life !

She might now grow enthusiastic and applaud her little Fagan ; he was rejoiced to go home alone, her Fagan, free under the stars, and to think that no doubt she was raging at the success, indisputable, fruitful, such as he had never yet had, which awaited him.

A few weeks after the representation at the Vaudeville, while the name of the author was still

displayed on the billboards and his likeness in the windows, the papers announced the celebration of the marriage, with great pomp, at the mayor's office in the Rue Druot, of M. De la Posterolle, master of requests in the Council of State, to Mme. Ravaut. Two Ministers attended the husband; the wife was attended by two academicians, one of whom had served her as a witness on the occasion of her first marriage some eighteen years before. Toilettes and pretty women! After the ceremony the newly married pair held a reception in their apartment in the Rue Lafitte.

“Frankly,” said Mme. Hulin to her lodger, who was visiting her

this evening, "has not the event that has taken place to-day affected you a little?" He declared to her that this was not the case. "Ah, how I should like to see you set free also! I know, indeed, that I am still deprived of my daughters, but you will see that Mme. La Posterolle will insist less strictly on the judgment of the court, and that my children will come to see me with more frequency in the future. A divorce, you see—a divorce; there is no other solution."

But she shook her head with the sad smile of an unalterable conviction.

Events, however, seemed to justify Régis. Rose and Ninette

now came more frequently to the Boulevard Beauséjour and did not confine their visits to the fortnightly Sundays. Sometimes the elder sister, sometimes the younger, out for a walk or on business with Mademoiselle, would drop in unexpectedly and remain for an hour or two; and if Rose continued to sulk with the neighbours, Ninette was now the first to want to go down to the garden and run about with little Maurice, who was already beginning to walk without his crutches.

“It is odd,” said the blundering Anthyme to the old servant downstairs, “but no one can get the idea out of my head that the former Madame is using her

daughters as spies to find out what is going on between my master and your mistress."

To see this no great perspicacity was needed. But Régis de Fagan, a subtle observer and painter of men, like many of his confrères, devoted all his acuteness of observation, his keenness of perception, to his work, and kept for the ordinary affairs of life only so much of it as was absolutely indispensable. He did not, then, observe the surveillance exercised over himself and Pauline Hulin, to determine the character and progress of their relations, with a purpose which was soon to be revealed to him.

One morning when he had sat

down to his work earlier than usual, Ninette appeared, her veil drawn tight over her cunning eyes, her little nose reddened by the keen air, one hand in the pocket of her jacket, the other holding her sun umbrella, and in her person an air of determination and craft that made her look older than she was, and increased her resemblance to her mother. She cast a look around the room ; then, having assured herself that they were quite alone, she began :

“A great trial is before us, my dear father. Imagine that Cousin”—they had continued to call La Posterolle by this name—“has received the appointment of prefect in Corsica.”

“And he has accepted?” cried De Fagan, who, with a violent movement of his long legs, pushed his armchair two yards back from the table. The little hat trimmed with lophophore feathers nodded affirmatively, signifying that Cousin had accepted.

“And your mother has consented to it? She no longer remembers our agreement, then?”

Oh, the dignity, the seriousness of Ninette, as she answered: “Our mother has had to sacrifice herself to her husband’s future. Ajaccio is only a second-class prefecture, but becomes a first on Cousin’s account. At his age it is a superb position.”

She would have made a good subject for a painter as she sat on

the edge of a low armchair, tracing the pattern on the carpet with the point of her umbrella, her watchful eyelids raised from time to time, the better to judge the effect of her words. He comprehended that she had been sent to him instead of her too simple, too natural elder sister, because they wished to obtain some important favour from him, and all at once, at sight of this astute little gossip, a flush of anger mounted to his cheeks as if he had found himself in the presence of his former wife.

“That Mme. La Posterolle should follow her husband to the end of the world matters little to me. But she promised, she swore,

that my daughters should not leave Paris—my consent to that they shall never obtain, never ! ”

He gave force to his declaration by striking the table violently with his clenched hand, one of those demonstrations which most often indicate a man's weakness, his incapability of resistance. Very calmly Mlle. Ninette drew his attention to the fact that her mother, far from wishing to take them away, had informed her and her sister, on the contrary, that they were to remain with the ladies of the Assumption, with permission to go out two Sundays in every month.

“ Only, you see, my dear father ”
—here a half-closing of the lids

and a look from beneath them—
“the idea of our both leaving
mammina grieves us greatly ; and I
have come to ask you to let one of
us, either Rose or me, whichever
you wish, stay with her, more
especially as Cousin’s stay in
Corsica is only temporary, and
he has the promise of the Minis-
ter——”

The little voice went on and
on and rose, like the cry of a
lark, high and higher, swifter and
swifter, and Régis, with his eyes
closed, could have fancied himself
transported ten years backward,
arguing with Mme. de Fagan,
vanquished beforehand by the
volubility, the unwearying stub-
bornness of his wife.

“I will see, I will think of it,” he said, rising.

But the matter was urgent. Cousin's appointment would appear in *L'Officiel* before three days.

“Well, to-morrow morning you and your sister shall have my answer, my child.”

VI.

LA POSTEROLLE, who had now been in Corsica for some three months, was regarded as one of the best prefects ever sent by the government of the Republic to Ajaccio, and this excellent reputation he owed less to his administrative abilities than to the charming trio of Parisians—his wife and his two step-daughters—residing with him at the Prefecture. The sweet smiles of these ladies, who were always to be met together, their harmonious toilettes,

displayed in walking, in riding, on horseback, in the carriage, had bewitched the town. The women in the cigar shops in the main street would come to the doorsteps with exclamations of admiration to look at them as they passed by, their brown eyes sparkling under their bright handkerchiefs. These people of the South have so keen a feeling for beauty and grace! Then the prefect entertained a great deal, and his Saturday evenings, to which the presence of the squadron in the roadstead lent additional splendour; his perpetual fêtes, while they enlivened the somewhat domestic society of Ajaccio, brought guests also from the neighbouring cities, Bonifaccio, Porto-Vecchio,

Sartene, and gave life to the hotels and employment to the seamstresses and the florists, making known and popular, in the remotest corners of the island, the continental and, in these parts, as yet new name of La Posterolle.

One fine Saturday evening, one of those Corsican winter evenings, comparable for the mildness of the atmosphere to our French May, at the hour when the gardens of the Prefecture were brilliant with multi-coloured lanterns, when the band of the admiral's ship were taking their places for the customary dance on the sanded walks, fragrant with the odours of orange trees and magnolias, Mlle. Rose, quite grown up and looking very

pale in her white ball-dress, running hither and thither in search of Mme. La Posterolle, found her at last in the little salon, with the guests who had dined with them and who had just finished taking their coffee. She beckoned to her mother with a trembling hand. "Read that," she said, handing her hastily an open letter, of which the mere handwriting made a shudder pass over the polished shoulders of the prefect's wife.

"Has this just come?" the mother asked in a low voice, as she read.

"This very instant—it was brought by a messenger from the hotel; he is waiting outside for an answer,"

Forcing herself to be calm the mother went on reading and reading, fanning herself all the time, and yet the letter was short enough :

I am waiting in the Hôtel de France, Place du Diamant, for my children to come and embrace their father. If I do not see them within half-an-hour I shall go myself to the Prefecture to see them.

RÉGIS DE FAGAN.

A terrified "What is to be done?" crossed the carmine lips of the prefect's wife. At the same time Rose murmured: "Poor papa!"

"I would advise you to pity him!" said the mother, in a strident tone of hatred, which caused

La Posterolle, who had left the little salon to go and receive the admiral who had just been announced, to stop short in the passage. He read the note over his wife's shoulder, and maintaining his admirable official composure—the only evidence of agitation he gave being a slight nervous twitching of the tips of his long white fingers, as they stroked his whiskers—he directed in an undertone: “Let Mademoiselle take them at once, as quietly as possible. What people will say, you know as well as I do. M. de Fagan's presence in Ajaccio makes the situation intolerable for us.”

As he ended, gold-laced hats and uniforms glittered on the broad

steps of the garden. La Posterolle turned, with a quick change of manner : “ Ah, my dear Admiral ! ” And above his voice—the voice of an orator and a man of the world—rose the flourish of the brass band of the *Redoubtable*, attacking the Marseillaise with an energy sufficient to have split the instruments. Soon afterward the dancing began, and while the waltzers, leaving the salons blazing with light, disappeared, whirling, in the fragrant shadows of the garden, Rose and Ninette, dark pelisses covering their low-necked ball-dresses, slipped away quietly with their Englishwoman, and walked along in the shadow of the tall dark houses to the Place du Dia-

mant, which well deserved its name on this evening, bathed as it was in all the splendour of a full moon, whose beams were reflected with metallic brightness from the dancing waters of the sea that stretched far away in the distance.

Under this fairylike light, a dark figure was to be seen, striding frantically up and down the asphalt pavement of the deserted Place.

How had Régis de Fagan brought himself to consent to his children's departure? And why had he allowed both of them to go when he had been asked for only one. This had been the result of the advice given him by Mme. Hulin after Ninette's visit.

"Suppose," she said to him,

“that you were to keep one of your daughters at the Assumption, as they propose to you, far from her sister and her mother, with the sole distraction of two Sundays a month spent with you. Your child would think herself a victim and you a tyrant. No, since that woman, in spite of all her promises, is going to leave Paris, taking with her either Rose or Ninette, let her take them both. Be for your children the one to suffer at a distance from them, keep the advantages of separation, the mirage of absence. Their affection for you will increase; and Mme. La Posterolle, still coquettish and pretty, now that she is in a new home, with a husband younger

than herself, will perhaps be the first to say to you: 'Rid me of them,' and your daughters will say after her: 'Take us back quickly.'"

As a consequence the girls had gone, with the promise that each should write once a week. At first the letters came very regularly; affectionate letters, full of those distant effusions which cost so little, and giving, too, a minute account of the fêtes in which they had taken part, the arrival of the squadron, the visit of the *Redoubtable*; real specimens of style, which the father, very happy, carried around Paris, showed in his club and in the lobbies of the theatre. Then Ninette only wrote; Rose was accompanying her stepfather

on a tour of inspection. On the following week no letter came, but instead a dispatch informing him that Ninette had sprained her foot on a visit to an ironclad. Another month passed bringing neither dispatch nor letter, but merely a note from Mademoiselle, saying that Nina was making a little visit to Sardinia and that Rose had caught the fever. Finally, the father had grown angry, and had threatened to set out at once unless they wrote to him immediately; and as they had not answered him, here he was now, trembling with rage, shaking his clenched hands, revolving in his mind plans of vengeance, if by ten o'clock precisely his children had not arrived.

“ Good evening, dearest father

“ Ah, my darlings, how happy I am ! ”

And the poor man, opening his arms and unclenching his hands, clasped his children to his heart, to his cheeks, moist with tears. His Ninette, his Rose ! He had them with him, he held them close to him, in spite of everything. What would be the use of complaints and reproaches ? They had such good excuses. “ If you only knew ! ” “ You cannot imagine —— ” “ Ask Rose —— ” “ Ninette can tell you.” They each took him by an arm, and, pressed closely between them, he allowed himself to be led outside the town,

along a broad barren strip of land bordered on the one side by the sparkling sea, on the other by gardens, villas, and family tombs, whose walls gleamed white on the dark hillsides. Behind them sounded the masculine tread of Mademoiselle, who remained at a sufficient distance to lose nothing of what passed between the father and the daughters.

Now it was Ninette who scolded him gently for landing unexpectedly in this way. What a scandal, when it should be known that the first husband of the prefect's wife was in the town ! “ Think of it, little father, see in what a position you place mamma ! ” Ninette's voice—she was not fifteen—had such a

tone of authority, her arm pressed her little father's arm so vehemently, that the latter began to feel himself guilty. "And for us, for my sister and me," continued the wily creature, growing bolder as her father began to waver, "what an impossible situation! No one here, or almost no one, is aware of the truth; they think that mamma was a widow, and that we were orphans."

Fagan was about to protest. This prospect of appearing as dead offended him and wrung his heart. But Ninette had an answer for everything:

"You know that in this country they know very little about our theatrical celebrities—they are so

far behind the times in everything. Imagine, if they disapprove of divorce! There would be cause enough there to prevent Rose's marriage.'

This time the father rebelled. What! Rose was going to be married, and he had heard nothing of it? But, by a tender pressure of the arm, his eldest daughter soon pacified him. Married—she was not that yet. A certain M. Rémory, a deputy at Bastia, was paying his addresses to her—the son of a president of a chamber in Paris—all that was to be desired as far as family was concerned. The marriage pleased La Posterolle, especially, for the reason that it would probably put an end

to the hostility between Bastia and Ajaccio, the magistracy and the government. Nothing, however, had been as yet definitely settled, and M. Rémory, senior, who lived in Paris, would probably soon make her father a formal demand for her hand, unless the scandal of his presence in Corsica should cause a public rupture.

“But there will be no scandal,” said the father, moved at feeling his tall Rose tremble. “Why, has the deputy already won your heart, then?”

And as Rose, instead of answering, seemed to be on the point of bursting into tears, he reassured her gently, made her sit down on a dry rock at the edge of the path,

close beside him, Nina on the other side, Mademoiselle keeping watch a few steps away, erect as a coastguard, in the moonlight.

“Listen to me, my darlings.” As he spoke he stroked his daughters’ hands between his own. “I confess that my action was imprudent. But everything can be remedied. They do not yet know who I am in the Hôtel de France. They do not know my name. I can take an assumed one, and remain there for five or six days without seeing any one, on condition of taking every evening, with you both, under Mademoiselle’s surveillance, a mysterious walk like this one.”

“But what will you do all

day?" said Rose, touched by this great affection in which there was not a shadow of selfishness. "If I could even go and stay with you."

But Ninette said quickly: "You could not think of it, sister! If one of us should be seen entering the hotel, well known as we are——"

"No, no, my children; don't be troubled as to how I shall spend my days. I will think of a *dénouement* for my play, or I will go fishing with the sardine fishers. I shall be quite contented if I can be with my girls in the evenings, sitting here, talking as we are doing now, with this enchanting view before us. It is so pleasant;

I am so happy. Ah, my darlings ! ”

It was true that an evening like this more than compensated him for months of sadness and solitude ; Ninette sitting on his knee, Rose leaning against his shoulder, before them the silvery sea, the vast sea, dashing itself with noise and foam against the shore. In the offing, to the right, the opening and shutting of the eye of the lighthouse of the Sanguinaires—the pupil of which is green and red by turns—and light, wavering shadows, moved by the warm breath of night, with odours of orange and citron trees from the gardens of Barbicaglia, where the dull sound of the fall of some ripe

fruit would make the talkers start suddenly. "Listen ! it sounds as if some one was walking there ; no, there." And all three would draw closer to one another, laughing.

The father, registered under a false name at the Hôtel de France, spent the whole of the following day in his room, leaving it only to go to the baths. At the door of the bathing-house—an establishment very little frequented in Ajaccio, as in most of the cities of the South—he stumbled against a young dandy armed with a white silk parasol, and holding in a leash a *griffen* about the size of a rat.

"Devil take me if that isn't

Fagan ! Hey, how goes it, my little heart, my famous old man ? The idea of our meeting here ! How perfectly delicious ! ”

Annoyed at being addressed in this fashion, desirous as he was of remaining unknown, Fagan drew aside the young fool, who was a member of the “ Hanneçons,” a club to which he himself belonged, and who had once chanced to perform an insignificant rôle in one of his pieces played on a *soir de gratin*. Thence the familiarity, the “ my little heart, my famous old man,” which, in the present circumstances, so far away from the *argot* of the boulevards, seemed to Régis pitifully ridiculous.

beg of you, Baron ”—the

father of little Rouchouze was a baron, and his son very willingly borrowed from him his title, along with many other things—"I am here under the strictest incognito, and you will oblige me——"

"Silence and discretion, old fellow. Stay! Now that I think of it, Mme. La Posterolle—then the young ladies of the Prefecture, those pretty manolas—accept my compliments, my dear fellow, your daughters are altogether good form—and if the queen of spades had not scraped me clean to the bone, I should have asked you for the younger—a little green, but I adore green walnuts."

Oh, with ~~what an~~ ^{what an} indescribable look did the ~~father~~ ^{father} measure this

little baron, who was squat and thick-lipped, and who seemed to be fifty years old instead of thirty, as he was ; with his complexion like the liver of a fish, his dress like an English coachman's, an enormous boar's head of cornelian fastening his *lavallière* of the colour of bullock's blood. He a husband for Ninette ! He controlled himself, however, having need of the man's discretion, and asked him with what purpose he had come to Corsica.

“To rusticate, my dear fellow. In consequence of a cleaning out at the Grand Prix, my governor has obliged me to return to the woods and waters abandoned at my mother's death ; and here you

have me for an indefinite length of time in this country of brigands, with a hundred francs a month which the state allows me, and which I get rid of in the evening at a club of fellows lying by for repairs, like myself, who are out of cash. Fortunately, I still have the good woman's diamonds, and then I have brought Firmin, the old chasseur of the club, with me ; and he is a real Father La Resource who will never let his master die of starvation. Come and breakfast with us, one of these mornings ; there, see—down there, that great barrack"—he pointed with the end of his parasol to a tall house, in the Italian style, that rose perpendicularly above the dark

waters of the harbour — “five rooms on the second storey, with ceilings like those in the Place Vendôme; to wait upon me the before-mentioned Firmin and my cook Seraphine, the beautiful wife of a muleteer of L’Ilee-Rousse, who is considered the best singer in Ajaccio. Between ourselves,” here the baron lowered his voice, and, with the most abominably fatuous air, confessed that Seraphine did not look upon him with disfavour.

“Needless to tell you that I shall keep this puppet at a distance,” wrote De Fagan to Mme. Hulin, in the letter in which he gave her an account of his journey, on his return to his hotel. But

how greatly he had deceived himself! In this chamber, to which he was confined by the will of his daughters, or rather of their mother—who exacted that he should never show himself in the daytime, a profound ennui soon took possession of him, wrapped him as in a suffocating fog, depriving him of every idea, and making it impossible for him to work. He rose late, watched, through his half-open sunny blinds, some ship entering the harbour, some Neapolitan coral fisher, with tall triangular sail spread like a wing; he read, without giving any attention to what he was reading; and after three frugal repasts, dispatched without appetite, the hour

of nine in the evening came at last, the hour at which his children were to meet him on the road to the Sanguinaires.

Thus it was that when, two days after their chance meeting, Baron Rouchouze made his appearance, a new pack of cards in his pocket, and proposed to him a friendly game of *cinq*, at a louis the point, De Fagan's youthful fondness for cards revived in the loneliness of this hotel room, and the playing began. To travel three hundred leagues, to cross the sea, to be in this odorous and picturesque island of rocks and woods, and to shut himself up with closed blinds for interminable games with little Rouchouze, when one is Régis de

Fagan, the dramatist of the Français and the Vaudeville !

At six o'clock Firmin, shaved and correctly attired in black from head to foot, would bring a glass of vichy to his master, who never failed, on replacing the glass on the tray, to make an expressive sign to the majestic valet, by rubbing his thumb and forefinger quickly together, signifying, " Let me have a few louis," for ill-luck continued to pursue the baron ; an ill-luck for which he consoled himself by thinking of the honour it was to be beaten by a celebrated writer, counting on making up his losses at the more profitable baccarat at his club.

But in the evening Fagan, walk-

ing arm-in-arm with his two daughters in the magic scene of which his eyes never wearied, forgot the stupefying dulness of the day. Always the first to arrive, seated in the shelter of some rock by the water's edge, he could hear, long before they arrived, the creaking of the little boots on the road, the stifled burst of laughter, the loud whispers of the girls, who were delighted by the romance and the mystery of these meetings.

“A real lovers' rendezvous,” said Ninette.

And Rose : “A lover for two, then.”

“For three, even ; Mademoiselle is with us.”

Suddenly the father would show himself, and there would be a volley of pretty little cries of terror, then long kisses, and voluble talk in low tones about the manner in which they had spent the day; the visits they had made and received; the trying-on of their costumes for the grand masked ball which was to be given at the Prefecture on the evening of Mardi-Gras, and at which Ninette was to appear as an infanta of Velasquez, in a stiff petticoat of shining satin, Rose as a noble Venetian lady, her hair dyed with henna.

“And to think that I shall not be able to see you!” complained poor Fagan, who had decided to embark in a week, that is to say

on the very morning of Mardi-Gras. "I have a great mind to wait for the next packet."

He said this timidly, for he had postponed his departure once before. But Ninette, always armed with the maternal instructions, turned him gently from his purpose. Of what advantage would this delay be to him, since he could neither go to the ball nor could they go up to his room in their ball-dresses; and, in order to confirm his wavering resolution she said: "Besides, if some day or other your presence here should chance to be known it would cause us real trouble. You must go, dear father, President Rémory will be going to ask you for the hand

of your daughter, and it is not Anthyme who——”

“ Well, well, I will go,” said the father, whose grumbling voice softened at the touch of fresh lips on his hand—the mute thanks of his big Rose.

Oh, yes ; Rose loved him dearly, without pretence or humbug. Ninette, too, loved him, but she was still very childish, completely under the influence of her mother and of that implacable English-woman, that religious fanatic, who, from the day on which she had first entered their house, had shown her contempt for the husband, whom she regarded as an indolent and sceptical Creole Parisian, working for the perdition

of souls by means of the theatre. On the affection of his Rose neither the pious venom of the governess, nor the calumnies of the mother, had had any effect; he felt that she was always his, and certain feelings of his heart he kept for her alone.

Thus it was, that, one evening, Ninette and Mademoiselle having loitered behind, he began to speak to her of Pauline Hulin, of the firm and noble friendship which this woman had for him. "You have misjudged her, my child," he said, "but some day you will know her better, and then you will see that I am right." Rose did not answer; her eyes fixed on the sea, she seemed absorbed in

contemplation of the changing lights of the pharos, the opening and shutting of its luminous eye.

“Do you know,” continued Fagan, “that if she had been a widow, as I had at first supposed, I should probably have married her. Would that have grieved you?”

“Oh, yes!” murmured the young girl with suppressed violence.

“And why?”

“Because to feel that there was another woman between my father and me, a woman who was not mamma in the house——”

“Your mother married again, however; there is a man at her

side in your house who is not your father."

"Oh, that is not the same thing ; or, at least, it does not seem the same thing to me."

Fagan smiled, half-angry.

"Then your mother had the right to marry, and I had not. You condemn me to remain a widower ; to live alone, while you, too, will marry, and, later, your sister. You will all have a home except me. That is a feminine way of reasoning, truly."

Rose pressed closer to him.

"What would you have ? I am jealous. From the very first day on which I saw that Mme. Hulin I detested her. Oh, I detested her as—as your friend. Think

how it would be if she became your wife.”

He was going to answer, but, Ninette joining them, they spoke of something else.

VII.

THE wind blew tempestuously on the Route des Sanguinaires, against which the surf dashed, making a broad moving white border to the road, black as night and more solitary than usual. Not a star was in the sky. The agitation of the unseen moaning sea could be guessed only by the rising and falling of the light of the pharos, like a lighted match thrown on the crest of the waves, that by some miracle had remained there burning.

“ Is it you, father ? ” called out one of Régis’ daughters in a low voice, at the sound of rapidly approaching footsteps on the pebbles.

“ Yes, my children.”

He was surprised to find them at the rendezvous before him, and attributed this precipitation to their desire that they might be longer together on this, his last evening, as he was to sail on the following day at one o’clock on the *General Sebastiani*.

“ What bad weather you are going to have ! ” said Rose, with a shiver. But the younger sister did not wish that there should be any emotion.

“ Who knows ? ” she said. “ Be-

tween this and to-morrow——” and skipping along, clinging to her father’s arm, she cried: “Let us take a run; with weather like this one can’t keep still.”

The storm intoxicated her. She made her father and her sister run along with her, in the face of the wind, laughing whenever the spray touched her. After awhile, stopping suddenly, she said: “Let us not go too far; you know, Rose, that we must be back early.” Fagan at once took the alarm. “Early,” he said, “and why?”

“We have a dress rehearsal of our charade. To-morrow is our first representation.”

He felt a gust of anger shake him, which, however, he soon con-

trolled, for he wished to leave an impression of unalloyed tenderness on his daughters' minds. He only said falteringly, cut to the heart : "It is not kind, just the last evening."

"Poor father!" Rose responded, and Ninette : "But listen, we arrived before you, my sister can tell you so. We waited fully twenty minutes for you."

The elder sister said nothing, feeling keenly how cruel and absurd was this bargaining about a few minutes. All three remained motionless, chilled, unable to find a word to say. Never had Régis de Fagan felt so weary of living and struggling, of disputing his children with that woman, as at

this moment, on this dark and stormy coast. Every feeling seemed dead within him—his hatred for the mother and his passionate love for his darlings. His fatherly heart for the time stopped beating, and there was a moment of mortal anguish, as of the supreme pang. A caress of Rose, who seemed to divine his feelings, a few adroit phrases of Ninette, drew him from this moral syncope, of which he kept henceforward the memory and the fear.

“Is what Nina tells me true, my Rose? Are you not inventing all that, to make our farewell less painful?”

“Nothing could be truer, father. M. Rémory has the promise of a

position as deputy at Versailles. So that the marriage will take place in Paris, and you will have your daughter near you."

"Without counting," added Ninette, "that before long Cousin will be appointed a councillor of state, and we shall all go to live there. We shall see each other very often. Hey! our delightful Sunday dinners; don't you think it would be pleasant to resume them?"

"Oh, yes," sighed Fagan; and, false or true, these hopes softened the bitterness of separation, the adieus made in the darkness of the night, when he embraced his daughters without seeing them.

Rose had spoken truly. When

he embarked on the following day, under a drizzling rain mixed with the spray of the surf, there was a tremendous sea; the waves were rough and high even in the shelter of the harbour; the jetty had disappeared under the water, the wharf was inundated at every moment with great waves which reached as far as the houses where the crowd ran, laughing, to take refuge.

Vessels came into the harbour seeking shelter: sailing vessels, steamers, coral-fishers, fishing-smacks—some damaged, all fleeing from the storm, the horrible battle of winds and waves, the continuous cannonade of which could be heard resounding in the

distance ; and in the roadstead was to be seen slowly advancing an immense transatlantic steamer, that, as it rose with some gigantic wave, seemed to overtop the houses, to be suspended in air, as it were.

When a vessel of this size turned out of its course to seek a shelter, the *General Sebastiani* might, without shame, postpone its departure until the following day ; but, to have done this, it should have had another commander than the little dark, dried-up man, with the profile of a turkey-cock, who strode up and down the bridge of his vessel, the stem of his large red pipe, that made more noise than the smoke stack of the steamer,

pressed tightly between his teeth, and who gave the same answer to all the frightened passengers who came to him: "Let whoever wishes embark; as for me I shall *saila wiss ze horses*"—forty little Corsican horses confined on the uncovered lower deck, and already neighing with fright, which he was taking to Marseilles.

Fagan, who was familiar with the sea, having made the passage to Bourbon several times, thought nothing of this seagull's voyage, one wing in air, the other in the foam; and then, to-day, he felt sadder and lonelier than ever; he was in one of those moods when one loves danger, when one seeks it, especially danger on the element

that makes death more grandiose, impersonal, as it were; death at the very mouth of darkness, in an apocalyptic vision. While the greater number of the passengers booked for the voyage postponed their journey, he established himself in the most commodious of the first cabins, and, as the forward bell rang faintly, the sound borne away by the wind, he went on deck.

The swarming quays, the dark old houses, the white sentry-box on the jetty, all flew past, all receded swiftly in the distance; and, as the vessel advanced in the broadening roadstead, the sea grew rougher, and the thundering of the breakers sounded more near. Soon

the rock of the Sanguinaires could be seen standing out against the black sky, the lighthouse at one extremity, the Genoese tower at the other, and further on, under the dark foliage of Barbicaglia, a road running like a ribbon along the shore, awakening in the heart of Régis the tender thought of his daughters, of the pleasant evenings so soon over.

Were they thinking at this hour of their father, or only of their costumes for the evening's charade? How lovely Rose would look in her Venetian robe, how pretty Ninette in the infanta's satins! What a pity not to be able to see them from some obscure corner, to catch so brief a glimpse of them, even,

as the passer-by catches of the women, cloaked for the ball, at whom he glances admiringly as they descend from their carriages and pass swiftly by in the light of the torches of the fête.

A tremendous sea, shipped at this instant by the vessel, abruptly put an end to his reverie, flooding the deck from one end to the other, tearing away the benches and the bulwarks, and throwing Régis, who was clinging to the rail at the entrance to the state-rooms, head foremost down the stairs. A priest and two officers, who were the only cabin passengers besides himself, helped him to rise to his feet and to get dry, then, the order being given to close the hatches, they

all four sat looking at one another in the dark and wet saloon where basins were rolling about on the divans. The screw had ceased to work. The vessel swung from side to side with a long rolling motion, in a silence that was terrifying. A cook, as white as his cap, half opened the door, and, clinging to the hand-rail, said: "The driving-shaft of the engine is broken. They are going to put on sail to try to return to Ajaccio." The tragedy reached its climax when, in consequence of the violence of the storm, it was found necessary to throw overboard nearly all the horses which, neighing and struggling with their legs in the air, their shoes clogged, in the foamy

wake of the vessel, made a black and stormy Montfaucon.*

Night was falling when, by a miracle of skill and luck, the *General Sebastiani*, that had left the harbour of Ajaccio as a steamer, re-entered it as a sailing-vessel. The violet haze of twilight, saturated with the spray of the surf, enveloped the city, where lights flashed to and fro, and where resounded shouts, drums, fire-crackers, trumpets, hunting-horns, and all the carnivalesque uproar of an Italian Mardi-Gras evening, to which the rage of the sea made a deep and continual bass. Fagan

* The name of a place in the environs of Paris where stood a famous gibbet, erected in the thirteenth century.

hesitated what course to pursue—whether to remain on board in the midst of the slush and wet, and the noise of the hammering, while the vessel was being repaired, or to dine and sleep on shore on the night of a masquerade, when the town was in an uproar, while his heart was still full of the sadness of parting. One was as bad as the other. What at last decided him was the thought of being near his children, the hope of seeing from a distance the lights of their ball, or even, should some happy chance aid him, of embracing them once more.

He was splashing about in the mud of the wharf, still swept from time to time by the waves, that

looked livid in the light of the lamps, when he jostled against a man who was running by with a bundle in his arms.

“Why, Fagan! Where have you sprung from, my famous old fellow? I thought you had sailed.”

“As you see, I have just arrived.” And having quickly related his adventure, Fagan asked :

“And you, Baron, where are you running so fast with that bundle you are carrying, like a tailor’s boy?”

It was true that for a gentleman who, to believe himself, had ridden in races, I don’t know how many times, to carry this big bundle wrapped in lutestring was decidedly wanting in style. To complete his

confusion, the baron suddenly remembered that he had allowed his famous old fellow to go away without settling a little balance of fifty or sixty louis which he owed him since their last sitting at *écarté*.

“Well, then, my dear Fagan,” he said, “since your evening is disengaged, come up and dine with me. After dinner we can play cards for a couple of hours, for the band will not come for me until very late.” The band consisted of eight or ten young men of the club, who, disguised and masked, were to try to make the round of the salons of Ajaccio without betraying their identity, as is the custom there on carnival nights. “I am just carrying home a costume of Me-

phisto—take care of the two steps, my dear fellow ; here we are now.”

Going up the stairs of the ancient house, whose balustrade and walls were streaming with moisture, Fagan, who had followed him in silence, hastily interrupted little Rouchouze :

“Are you going to the Prefecture in your rounds to-night ? ”

“To the Prefecture ? Yes, indeed ! They are going to have a ball and a comedy.”

“Well, my dear Baron, try to find me some sort of a disguise, and do me the favour to take me with you.”

“Nothing easier,” returned the other, whom this service put at his ease with his creditor. The Italian company of the Grand

Theatre were all at his service, and they could ask the basso Deodato—no, the baritone Paganetti, rather, a tall man like Fagan—for any costume he wished. “Ah, there is Firmin ! Firmin, a cover ! Monsieur dines with us.”

The dampness of the staircase seemed to have penetrated to the apartment, which was lofty but plainly and scantily furnished, that the widow Limperani, the mother of a naval chaplain absent for several years, rented to Baron Rouchouze. Shells, exotic plants, dried corals, a miniature frigate on the chimneypiece, a few sacred pictures hanging on the walls, and everywhere, on the backs of the worn armchairs, on the cracked

marble of the consoles, crochet-work ; and before all the chairs, rugs, which illy concealed the worn-off red of the floor ; the whole cold and dark and uncomfortable, and seeming still more poverty-stricken from an odour of fried onions that came from the kitchen. The contrast between this lodging and the elegant manners of the lodger and of his majestic Firmin was comical.

The latter seemed more embarrassed than his master at introducing a Parisian to the poverty of their abode ; to disguise it he redoubled the dignity and ceremoniousness of his bearing, announcing : " Monsieur the Baron is served," with a pompousness,

futile, indeed, when they entered the dining-room, fireless and curtainless, with its high and dingy windows through which could be seen the glimmering lights of the harbour, and its mean table, on which smoked the onion soup between a dish of boiled fish and the traditional quail, the *bruccio*, which is served at every Corsican dinner.

Ah, yes, Monsieur the Baron was served, but how miserable the dinner ! Which did not prevent him, however, from swelling out his ruffled front and winking his little roguish eyes as he recounted his numberless conquests in the island, in every rank of society.

“Apropos, and Seraphine ?” asked Fagan, as they returned to

the parlour, where coffee was waiting for them on the card-table, beside counters and a new pack of cards.

“Seraphine — oh, more than ever! An ideal woman, you know. One must come to Corsica — a poetess, a cook, the limbs of Diana, and not costing a radish. But wait, my little heart, you shall judge for yourself.”

She came at her master's call — a tall, healthy-looking girl, with a stout figure and robust, but well-shaped limbs, whose graceful outlines were revealed through the scanty folds of her short petticoat.

“Take that off,” said the baron, lifting the handkerchief thrown over her hair and partially con-

cealing a low-browed face, marked by a long scar, with brown eyes, and large, hard, regular features.

“My compliments, my dear friend,” responded Fagan to the significant “Hey?” of his host. “But where did she get that fine cut she has under the eye?”

The woman understood him. “*Coltello del marito*,” she said proudly.

“Yes, my dear fellow, that brutal muleteer, in a jealous quarrel—with a slash of the knife. Poor old girl! There!” The baron tapped her on the hip with one hand, while with the other he cut the cards, impatient to take the revenge for which he had brought Fagan to his rookery.

The bell rang violently. "Your costume, no doubt," said Rouchouze, but suddenly he became very pale, as a heavy step and loud ogre-like laughter resounded through the corridor and afterward through the kitchen into which Firmin introduced the newcomer.

"*Il marito !*" murmured Seraphine, in a hurry to return to her fire, while the baron said to her in a whisper, "Make him dine well."

"You seemed disturbed," said Fagan to his host. "Is it Othello who has arrived?"

"No, but that animal, when he comes, always demands something."

The noise of heavy hobnailed shoes was heard in the corridor, and a rude hand knocked at the door. "Come in," said the baron, almost voiceless.

A smooth-faced giant, the *pelone* falling over his shoulders, a scarlet silk neckerchief knotted loosely about a round, massive neck, which the fierce sun of the mountains did not appear to have browned, a chest broad and hard as a marble slab, and enormous hands, the most noticeable part of his person—hands the colour of the soil, twirling an old cap that smelled of the deer and the thicket.

"What news, Master Palombo?"

"Nothing good, Moussieu Baron," and very coolly Seraphine's

husband proceeded to relate how two of his mules, magnificent animals, had been caught in a rainstorm in Monte Rotondo, and, quick as a flash ! both died of a *pountoura* ; they had to be replaced at once, or his traffic would be interrupted just in the height of the season, which would be the ruin of himself and his brothers. But where the deuce was he to find so much money as that ? So that it had occurred to him—Seraphine, *she* had said that *Moussieu*—he was so good to her——”

During the whole time that the man was talking, his little elephant's eyes, buried among the folds of the skin, were fixed on the arm of the chair where Baron

Rouchouze had thrown the handkerchief, left there forgotten by Seraphine, and as he gazed his voice became sharp, almost insolent, in spite of the affected sweetness of the words, and the baron observing his looks, and the gradually increasing menace of his tones, as greatly agitated by the presence of this bit of silk as if the husband had surprised him with his wife sitting on his knee, lost his presence of mind, and stammering with fear asked how much his fine fellow, his excellent Palombo, required to replace his pair of mules.

“Eight hundred francs, not a scudo less.” Here the muleteer, who had reserved this effect for the

climax, stretched out his hand and in a severe tone said :

“ Why, that belongs to Seraphine ! ”

The baron changed countenance, and turning to Fagan he said in a low voice :

“ For pity’s sake, my old friend, lend me forty louis ; you will save me from a catastrophe.”

He took the long blue banknote which Fagan handed him, and giving it Palombo, with an easy and reassured air, said :

“ Eight hundred francs for your mules, my good fellow, and the rest for your wife.”

The ruffian pocketed the note, returning thanks, and went back to the kitchen, whence proceeded

for a long time afterward the sound of laughter and of the sputtering of fish frying.

After this assault Rouchouze wished to resume the game, but his partner threw down the cards and stretching his hands across the table took the baron's hand in his, and with a cordial, almost a paternal, air said :

“ No, my boy, let us stop now, I request it of you.”

“ But, my good——”

“ I know, you want your revenge, but I have something better to propose to you. The money which I have been winning from you during the last ten days weighs heavy in my pocket ; that is the reason why I was so willing just

now to come to your assistance. Let me add to that sum a couple of thousand-franc notes, which your persistent ill-luck——”

“O, M. de Fagan!” the poor devil stammered, his lips trembling with emotion. “If you only knew what a service——”

Leaving the sentence unfinished, dropping his mask of a dandy he buried his face in his hands and began to weep aloud, like the grown-up child that he was. Suddenly the sound of a horn was heard under the window.

“There they are!” cried the baron, starting to his feet, and drying his eyes. “Quick! let us dress.”

And while he encased his legs in

the tights of Mephisto, and adjusted on his head the little Dantesque headdress, he murmured in heartfelt tones :

“ Ah, what a good comrade this old Fagan is, in spite of everything ! ”

But Fagan, busily engaged in putting on the parti-coloured coat and the fool's cap with its dangling bells lent him by the baritone Paganetti, made him no answer.

In the obscurity of the fog on the quay young maskers, in various colours, were moving hither and thither, all having the soft speech, all using the boulevard *argot* of the club and the stable of little Rouchouze, their model and instructor. Lisped in the voices of grown men,

this had the effect of a Parisian costume on a woman of Tahiti.

“My friend Rigoletto,” said the baron, presenting his guest.

“In search of his daughter,” added Fagan, in order to say something. And the other whispered in his ear: “Of his daughters.”

“Why! that is true, I had not thought of it,” and the father smiled at this stage coincidence, assigning him a rôle in keeping with his situation.

“Where shall we go first?” inquired some one. Fagan, who had no desire to spend the night out, responded: “To the Prefecture.”

After traversing two or three narrow lanes, that, notwithstanding the darkness, were full of anima-

tion, the band, escorted by a crowd of street urchins, carrying multi-coloured lanterns, and keeping up an incessant repetition of a local catch: "O Ragani! O cho dotto! O Ragani! O cho dotto!"—arrived at La Posterolle's just as the charade ended. They made a merry entrance into the grand salon, in the midst of the hubbub of people glad to talk and walk about to stretch their limbs, after having sat still and silent for two hours.

The rustling of the costumes, the confusion of colours, of aigrettes, of plumes were received with shouts and laughter, and while some one went to inform the master and mistress of the house of their arrival, Fagan satisfied

himself before a tall mirror set in the wall of the complete transformation of his person, of the security of his incognito under the black velvet mask, edged with lace, and the enormous ruff rising to his chin. No, not even his ex-wife herself could recognise him. Thereafter he gave himself up to the boyish enjoyment of his adventure, to the pleasure of surprising his daughters in that part of their social life the entrance to which was interdicted to him.

One by one, the baron at their head, the band filed past M. and Mme. La Posterolle, and then proceeded to make the tour of the rooms between two rows of the guests. When Régis, who was

the last of the band, paused before the woman who had been his wife for so many years, he had some difficulty in recognising her. She had grown stouter since their last meeting ; her hair, which had changed its colour once more, was powdered, contrasting charmingly with the still youthful shoulders and arms, and the infantile expression which increasing plumpness lent her face. But the woman herself he recognised easily in the always wily smile, the eyes answering the mouth with a keen, a subtle correspondence, and this smile sent an involuntary shiver of fear through him. She had done him so much harm, she could do him so much

harm still! Bowing to the ground before her, without venturing to raise his eyes, he passed quickly on to the husband, that haughty imbecile whose head, empty and sounding as a gourd, had replaced his on Mme. Ravaut's pillow.

"I know those eyes," thought the prefect's wife, as the band passed on, and turning to La Posterolle, she asked, "Who is that?"

"How do I know?" he answered evasively.

Walking between the two hedges of bare shoulders, of black dress coats, of gold lace, of aiglets, Fagan heard the whispered interrogation on all sides as he passed, "Who is that? Who is

that?" In spite of their skill in disguising themselves, in altering their voice and their gait, all the others had been recognised; it was in vain that they had shaken their heads with a laugh, in denial — the pronouncing of a name had betrayed them. "Hey, Forcioli," "Ho, Pepino," "Good evening, Baron." But the tall mask, the last of the band, who took good care not to speak, only shaking his fool's cap and bells in people's faces, who the devil could he be?

As for him, he thought of nothing but his daughters, surprised at not seeing them. Where were they? Perhaps changing their dresses after the charade. He

was asking himself how he would be able to wait for them, molested as he was by the general curiosity, when suddenly they appeared at the entrance to the second salon, both of them, his Rose and his Ninette, and how lovely they looked ! Drawn along in the procession, which he could neither hasten the progress of nor break away from, he whispered in the ear of the younger, as he passed her, a " Good evening, lovely infant," so softly that the girl trembled under the satin bows of her long corsage, and, divining the truth, sought her father's eyes, already turned away in quest of the elder sister.

Her golden hair falling over her

shoulders and reaching to her thick damask petticoat, Rose stood leaning on the arm of a handsome young man, with a very youthful face and a very bald head, a real infant pettifogger, looking at the maskers as they passed by, when suddenly she felt on her gloved hand the caressing touch of a velvet mask, while a loving voice, the voice of some one who, she knew, had sailed the day before, murmured: "Good night, beautiful dogaresse!" Greatly agitated, she was about to say something in answer, when the fool's-cap of Rigoletto, that she had heard tinkling a moment since close beside her, then seen shaken with a frantic gesture

above the heads of the crowd, disappeared in the direction of the garden. Wishing to find out the truth, she looked everywhere for Ninette, and found her at last in the first salon, in close conference with Mme. La Posterolle, who was very pale under her rouge. With her wickedest, sharpest smile, she said under her breath, as if speaking to the feathers of her fan: "I will avenge myself, little ones; I swear to you that he shall pay me for this!"

Then the band struck up a waltz, there was a general movement of invitation, of getting on the floor, and the three women, the mother and her daughters, each agitated in a different way, joined in the mazes of the dance,

VIII.

RÉGIS DE FAGAN, on his return to Paris, met with a cruel disappointment when, on reaching the house, he found all the blinds of the ground-floor closed and the garden deserted. Pauline Hulin had gone away, taking with her all the household, and Anthyme, although he had witnessed her departure, was unable to give his master the slightest clue as to where she had gone. Annette, the waiting-woman, had said to him: “We are going away.”

“And where to?” he had asked.
“To Havre,” she had answered,
and this was the only information
Anthyme could give.

De Fagan could not believe it.
Havre! With what purpose could
she have gone to Havre, when her
husband lived there? But her
husband had come, Anthyme said,
and Annette thought that he had
come to take away the little boy;
then, he had gone away again
alone, and Madame two days
afterward.

What was he to believe? What
was he to think?

Filled with despair, he remained
in the house for several days after
his arrival, in the expectation of
receiving a letter, or with the

vague hope that, some morning, on opening his window, he would see little Maurice playing in the garden, looking up at his friend's room. But no, the lawn, still unanimated by the child's play, appeared to him in its silence and desertion each morning larger than the last, and in the circular avenue, where he and his dear Pauline had walked so often, interchanging sweet and never-ending confidences, weeds were springing up among the gravel, telling of absence and neglect.

Once, however, when his servant entered the room abruptly, Régis' heart gave a great bound. He thought Anthyme had brought him news,

“No, Monsieur; but here is something much more strange; the morning papers state that Monsieur has become insane.”

Having said this in the peculiar tone of ill-humour which he always used when speaking to De Fagan of his unsuccessful pieces, the servant drew the window curtains wide open and showed his master the paragraph, reproduced in the two most widely-read journals in Paris. It was stated in both, in almost the same words, that, as a result of malarial fever, contracted in Corsica, the celebrated dramatic writer, Régis de Fagan, had become insane. The first symptoms of the malady had declared themselves at a ball in Corsica,

“Ah, the jade!” cried Régis. He had recognised the touch and the invention of his wife; and, in his exasperation, giving Anthyme several contradictory orders at once, in a rough tone which was not habitual to him, he surprised in the poor fellow’s terrified eyes the thought, very clearly expressed: “Has Monsieur really become insane?” This look of his servant was a prompt lesson to him, and decided him upon the manner he should adopt with the public. If he had followed his first passionate impulse he would have gone at once to the newspaper offices and demanded a retraction in loud and angry tones, thereby justifying the printed abomination. But neither

must he go to the other extreme, and assume an exaggerated calmness and indifference, which they would not fail to characterise as an unnatural apathy.

At both of the newspaper offices, when he presented himself in them, he received very unsatisfactory excuses; the news had been sent to them by cable direct from Ajaccio; a retraction would appear on the following day, and, if he had the slightest desire for it, an investigation could be very easily made. An investigation—to what end? That would be to attach too much importance to a childish prank, a mystification. And in the offices those who were present repeated the words, “a childish prank, a

mystification," scrutinising his very looks, auscultating his words and his actions. Ah! the wretch knew how to poison his world! Against any other calumny one might defend one's self, produce proofs, but against this——

During the whole day De Fagan showed himself on the Boulevard, arousing everywhere an amazed curiosity that he should be walking out in the sunshine, among the free and the living. He had been able to escape, then! At his club they received him with an exaggerated cordiality, an exaggerated eagerness, as they might have received a friend whom they had hardly expected ever to see again. He dined, jested, promised a play

for the coming annual fête ; then, having spent his evening in the lobbies of two or three theatres, he returned to the club at the hour when the young dandies, emulators of Baron Rouchouze, go there to replenish their funds, and he remained sitting at a gaming-table until morning, to prove conclusively that he was not mad.

Returning home, he opened the window that looked out upon the garden. Day was beginning to break. On the topmost branch of a clump of elms, dimly visible in the dawning light, a blackbird was whistling in the fog, in which his pointed beak seemed to trace the arabesque of his song. De

Fagan remained for a long time sunk in reverie, sad and heartsick. This Paris, which he had been scouring all day, how lonely he felt in it! So many faces of men and women, and not one belonging to him! Was it this infinite discouragement or was it the morning dews, with which the fine cloth of his coat was saturated, that caused him to shiver and close the window, seized by an inexplicable *malaise* which, far from inclining him to seek relief in rest and sleep, over-excited his brain and made him begin a long letter to his elder daughter, the only being to whom he could open his heart, and who could revive in him the love of life?

“I do not wish, my beloved Rose, to leave unnoticed, for more than a day, the horrible news which you must have seen in the papers. No, thank God! I am neither mad nor in danger of becoming mad; your father is just as you have always known him—his mind free, his eye clear, a play under way and others taking shape in his head. I owe this news a lost day and night spent in showing myself everywhere and at all hours in Paris, to give proof of my mental balance. The papers will contradict the statement to-morrow, and the day after no one will talk of it any longer. The mistake made by those who tried to ruin me by this perfidy was to believe possible, in

our times, and in the case of a man as well known as I am, the adventure of the unfortunate Sandon, the advocate who was confined for ten years in the time of the Second Empire, on a false charge of insanity. Ah, if I had wished to avenge myself, to allow the investigation proposed to me to be made, into what a trap those slanderers and fools would have fallen ! But hatred takes up too much time. I have devoted all my life to work, and this is a blessing, you see. I am so lonely ; I have no longer even the neighbours who hitherto had spared me the desolation of living in an empty house. Mme. Hulin has gone away, taking her child with her,

doubtless in order to escape from the iniquitous power of the law which would have demanded him from her to deliver him to his father. And yet this Councillor de Malville is an upright man. How could it have occurred to him and to his coadjutors, when they pronounced the decree of separation, to add to it the frightful clause that from the age of ten years until the completion of his studies the child should remain under the authority of his father ! What a prospect for the poor woman ! To think that they might place her delicate boy in some distant boarding - school, choose even some institution of peculiar severity, where he should

be deprived of the care and attentions of his mother ! Who knows but that they might even discover in him wicked and rebellious tendencies requiring his confinement at Mettray, that prison which they call a home ; or even his admission to the naval academy and, afterward, departure, exile. Poor Mme. Hulin ! how well I can comprehend her taking away her child and hiding him in some remote corner !

“ Meantime, here I am, deprived of a delicate womanly friendship which was becoming every day dearer to me ; even of Maurice, whose affectionate prattle amused me. With his childish precocity, developed by sickness, his coaxing

ways, his almost girlish grace, he reminded me of you at his age, when, on account of some slight cold you would remain indoors and would come to read at my table—of the pride you used to take in bringing me some big book, too heavy for your strength, in helping me at my work, by handing me a pencil or a box of pens. And Ninette, do you remember when, sitting on the carpet, she would ‘arrange papa’s library,’ leaving my books all in disorder, with the titles upside down, the authors’ names mixed up, large books and small together, in a touching confusion which I made Anthyme respect. Well, the voice of little Maurice was like the echo of those

divine follies ; those memories which I keep hidden away in a corner of my heart. I could never have believed that I should miss him as I do.

“ A sign of old age, my darling. Ah, yes ! of old age. I am going on forty-five, the age in which, physically, a man no longer lives on his income, when he begins to spend his capital of life and of health. The strength is no longer renewed, every grief furrows a wrinkle, every emotion weakens and exhausts the nervous force. It is sad to think it, my darling, but the best days of my life are over, my greatest successes won ; now begins the decline of courage and of opportunity, and behind me,

treading close on my heels, with mad and greedy haste, a younger generation. Ah, one soon becomes old and worn-out in these days, and when one is old and worn-out, to have neither hearth nor family is hard. At the hour in which I am writing to you, exhausted by my night at the club, the garden, shrouded in the morning mists, before me, you cannot imagine how sad my *home* seems to me, and how good it would be to know that some dear one was sleeping in the next room—a wife or a child, whom I should be afraid to disturb by walking too heavily. Nothing—no one; not even below.

“ You will say to me that I had this family, and that I did not

know how to retain them. But whose was the fault? I have never made any complaint; I have never said anything to you against your mother, who has not, however, observed the same reticence. But it is necessary that you should know how I have sacrificed myself, that you should see that it is not just, whatever the Court may have thought in the matter, that I should live alone, always alone, when my wife—— Ah, good Heavens! in what a way am I speaking to you of magistrates, my big Rose; you who are going to marry one, and a very fine-looking one, as I thought when I saw him on the evening of Mardi-Gras in your state salons. His

father, from whom I received a visit the day before yesterday, also pleased me greatly—a large man, not too dignified for a president, intelligent, with keen eyes, and a long white beard, which greatly scandalises the Palace, and democratic opinions, to which he owes his extraordinary advancement. Penniless, it is true. He is very glad that I have been thinking for a long time past of my Rose's dowry. Without entering into details, I may tell you that I cede to you the royalties on my two most profitable successes, 'The Enchanted Gardens,' at the Opéra-Comique, and 'M. and Mme. Dacier,' at the Comédie Française; at the lowest calculation twenty

thousand francs a year. The father of your Gaston seemed satisfied. I showed him the album in which I have your likeness and that of your sister, taken at different ages ; he was delighted with them, and he already talks of Ninette for his youngest son, who is preparing for Saint Cyr. Be completely happy, then ; the affair is concluded, at least unless they tell me at Garin de Malville's, where I have an appointment, that M. Rémory, senior, is a convict escaped from Noumea, and shot into a presidency for extraordinary services. I should have begun by informing myself on this point, but this Malville, the only magistrate of the Court of Paris with

whom I am acquainted, is organising a grand Wagnerian festival at Lille, and will not return for some days. And when he comes back and everything has been satisfactorily arranged, and my children married as quickly as possible, I shall speak to them of a project, of a dream which haunts me. Indeed, why not tell it to you at once, with the condition that the matter shall remain between us if it seems to you unrealisable.

“What would you think of our all three living at Versailles? The appointment of Gaston Rémy, it appears, is a matter of a few weeks, just the necessary time for you to marry and hire, not far from the park, a charming two-

storey house with a court and garden. I shall install myself on the second floor, you on the first, each having his own *ménage*, with a separate kitchen, with facilities for eating together in the large hall downstairs. See what a happy life that would be for me! My daughter near me, so that I could hear her step, her laugh, and make up to myself for all the unhappy days spent apart from her. And for you, how convenient it would be!

“He will not be troublesome, the poor father. You want him—tap, tap, on the ceiling; he feels himself in the way—up he goes again to his rooms. And when baby comes, what a comfort when

you go out of an evening. Who will stay at home and take care of the house, and the child, and the servants? Grandfather. And meanwhile, far from bores, from borrowers, far from actors begging for a part, from managers who hurry on the piece in hand with feverish haste, the happy grandfather will work quietly and tranquilly to earn the dowry of Ninette. I should be happier than I have ever been before, and, knowing how good and affectionate a daughter you are, I am sure you would be happy in seeing my happiness."

Rose de Fagan answered her father's letter by return of post ;

“We were charmed, my dear father, to learn that the papers had been misinformed and that your brain had never been affected; but let your big girl scold you a little, and confess that she is right in saying that, although your mind may not have been touched, your conduct has not always been that of a sensible man. Your appearance at the Prefecture, on the night of Mardi-Gras, with those young men, offended every rule of propriety, acknowledge that; and mamma and Cousin, whom you placed in so embarrassing a position, had good reason to be angry with you. Forgive me for saying that such actions, at your age, smack a little too much of the

theatre. The expression is Gaston's, who loves you, however, with all his heart, and admires your plays greatly. But, indeed, to go running about the streets, masked, with that little Rouchouze ! to make your way into a house to which entrance was for so many reasons interdicted to you—consider, little father ! And then, M. La Posterolle has been told that you intend to write a play about his marriage and your divorce ! Is that to be believed ?

“After this well-merited scolding, let us pass on to pleasanter subjects. I was greatly touched by your intentions with regard to my dowry. With the emoluments of Gaston we shall be able to live

like lords. But what a pity that your idea of a life in common would not be practicable! It would be delightful, loving each other as we do; but a thousand things, which we have not thought of, stand in the way of this association. But, good Heavens! is not life tormented by a thousand privations and contrarieties? If you were always to be with us, how would mamma be able to visit me without constantly running the risk of meeting you? And such meetings would be as unpleasant for you as they would be indecorous in the eyes of the world—of the servants, even. The same thing would be true with regard to Cousin, who would either have to

abstain entirely from visiting us, or put you in the necessity of going upstairs to your own apartments whenever he appeared; and, without speaking of my own feelings, Gaston will be obliged to see a great deal of M. La Posterolle. It is to him that we owe the promotion and our marriage; when he shall be made a Coucillor of State, and mamma and he live in Paris with Ninette, we shall visit each other constantly. My dearest father, your dream was only a dream; cast it to the winds, think no more about it, and console yourself with the assurance that, at all events, your daughters will visit you very often—not two Sundays a month only, as the law decreed.

“Of course Gaston knows nothing of your project; he would have found it too painful to say no, grateful as he is to you for all your goodness, and the more especially as he has requested me to ask you to do him a little service, in addition to your other favours. It is to find out what would be the cost of some pearls for a wedding present. I should like three rows, fastened with a ruby. Now, dear father, look around and inquire. You will find at the end of this letter a list of a few other little commissions, which I shall make no excuse for giving you, accustomed, as I am, to be spoiled by the best and tenderest of fathers.”

He had difficulty in reading the last lines, so confused were they through the tears which blurred his sight. Poor child, it was not hers, this heartless letter, full of moral reflections! It had been dictated to her, her hand had been guided, and behind Rose, seated at her blue silk desk, he saw the treacherous smile of *Mme. La Posterolle*, he heard her hard voice commenting and correcting.

God's name! yes, a fine play his story would make!—a play at which every father would weep—a few mothers, too, perhaps, and which should be called “*The Divorce of Père Goriot.*”

IX.

“ I DON'T know, Monsieur ; I will go and see.”

De Fagan could not but admire the imperturbable coolness of the servant who did not know whether his master was at home or not when from the antechamber, through the crash of all the notes of the piano, could be heard the voice, the never-to-be-forgotten voice of Councillor de Malville, howling, yelping, miauling, neighing, the latest score of his beloved musician. The man returned, and

with impassive countenance said, amidst the musical uproar that made the windows shake: "If Monsieur will please——"

Councillor Garin de Malville, seated at the piano, turned toward his visitor a long, nervous-looking face, of no age, like all those furrowed and stamped by grief, with lack-lustre eyes, a mouth at this moment distorted and stretched to its utmost extent by Wagner, and from whose dark cavern issued notes in a disorder comparable to that of the large study, in which musical scores and piles of dusty law books encumbered every article of furniture, making it almost impossible to turn around.

"Régis, my friend, listen to this

—the second act of ‘Tristan and Iseult,’ the love scene—*Isolde—Geliebte*——”

Seated on a pile of books, De Fagan submitted with resignation to this harmonic douche, knowing that nothing could prevent the maniac from singing the piece to the end, interrupting himself at every bar by cries of ecstasy, voluptuous transports: “It is like morphine, my dear fellow, like morphine, which intoxicates and which soothes. *Endlich—Endlich*——”

At last, when *Iseult* and *Tristan*, exhausted, had loosened their embrace, the music-mad magistrate, turning around on the piano stool, inquired about Régis’ work, about

his health. "Not very good, eh? Yes, I can see that—a bachelor's life, an artist's life. Why did you not follow your wife's example? She has married again, and without losing any time! There is a woman who makes a mess of her Wagner. Apropos, and your daughters? Tell me about your daughters."

"Precisely, Councillor——"

His eldest daughter was going to be married, to enter a family of magistrates, the Rémorys, and he counted on M. de Malville to give him information in regard to the respectability of those people. The councillor smacked his long, smooth lips.

"Respectable—Rémory? Well, yes; but a new man, a magistrate

who has not passed through the subordinate ranks ; finally, the only one of our presidents who wears a beard, when the Premier has had his shaved off through respect for the house ; now you know what your Rémory is ; and if the son resembles the father——”

Here followed a description of the Court of Paris, with a disquisition on the old and new men, so compendious and detailed that De Fagan, already depressed and slightly feverish, would have retired without ceremony, but for a question that trembled on his lips, the real postscript of his visit, and which he succeeded in introducing just as he was going away. He wanted to ask about a certain

matter—Hulin—yes, that was the name, Hulin; a decree of separation which the councillor would perhaps remember.

“Remember! Hulin of Havre, a bass voice of the first order, the man in all France who knew his Bach best—he took less to Wagner; he had promised me, however, to go this year to Bayreuth, poor devil——”

“Why, has anything happened to him?”

“Only that he is dead, nothing more.”

“Dead! and—when did he die?” faltered De Fagan in a voice suddenly grown grave.

“About a month ago; he wrote to me on the morning of the 4th,

and on the afternoon of the same day he killed himself in his bed with an ordnance revolver. Ah! there was a man who was madly, desperately in love." And reminded of his mania, the councillor, distorting his mouth and showing the whites of his eyes, resumed his miauling.

"*Iso-o-olde! Geli-i-iebte!*" while Régis, dazed, overwhelmed, made his way to the door, stumbling against music and dictionaries.

Dead! Everything was now explained — Pauline's departure, and, in reality, for Havre, where her presence had been required for the settlement of the estate. A few months of mourning, to comply with the conventionalities, and this

charming woman might become his wife. There was now nothing to prevent it. Rose's jealousy? A childish caprice, which a few hearty kisses, an additional bracelet among her wedding presents, would soon overcome. Dead! dead! was it possible that from so black a word could spring so great a joy? He left the councillor's in a fever of excitement, talking to himself aloud as he walked along the Rue des Saints Pères toward the quay. His years, the teeth he had lost, his whitening temples were forgotten. His step had not been more joyous twenty years before, on leaving his fiancée the day on which her parents had said to him, "She consents, and we

also." The sky had not seemed more beautiful to him then than it did now, rose and pearl-hued, on this April evening, with the damp sidewalks, the first songs of the birds, the first green buds on the trees of the Tuileries.

He, too, felt in all his being the influence of the spring, but violent, with throbbings of the heart and a sense of oppression that he had already been feeling for some days past without knowing what to attribute it to ; but which he had thought was probably caused by the warmer air, by the spring weather, and which was now increased by the prospect of this hitherto un hoped-for happiness. Already he saw her large blue eyes

suffuse with tenderness as she confessed her love, and the gown she would wear on that day; he took his tea in the little salon with the intimate and assured feeling that he was at home, that he would never again leave this house. And the delightful visions he wove as he walked along reflected so much joy on his countenance that, two or three times, he fancied that he was attracting attention and that his smile occasioned other smiles in those whom he passed by.

Stopping before a show case in the Rue de la Paix, less for the purpose of looking at the jewels it contained than in order to indulge his fancies at his ease, a "Pardon,

dear Master," uttered simultaneously by a manly voice and a feminine one, caused him to turn round quickly. He saw before him a man and his wife—actors—named Couverchel, who had been married twenty years, and who were noted on the Boulevard for their mutual affection and admiration. The wife, who had been an actress at the Vaudeville, had just had an illness lasting for two years, during which time she had been forgotten and her place filled at the theatre, and nothing could be more touching than the manner in which her husband begged De Fagan for a rôle for her ; speaking of her beauty, of her genius, the looks of blind adoration which he

cast at the scarred, sickly face of his poor wife, whose eyes thanked him so sweetly with the grateful pride of the woman and the artist. The part being granted, and another promised to the husband, De Fagan watched them as they went away together with joyful step, not walking apart like a fashionable couple, their arms hanging by their sides, but closely linked arm-in-arm, so that one felt that death alone could part them. And they were actors, those vain and trivial souls whose silliness and childishness he had so often ridiculed; yes, among humble players it was that he found the ideal marriage of which he had dreamed. Ah, if Pauline wished,

what happy years they might spend thus together, united, in spite of fate and the world!

“Is Monsieur ill?” These were the first words of Anthyme, when he noticed the strange expression on his master’s countenance when the latter returned that evening to his distant lodging. Oh, no! he was not at all ill. Only he still felt that feverish heat, that superabundant expansion of life that seemed to stifle him, imprisoned within the too narrow confines of his breast.

And as he was about to seat himself at the table, the white tablecloth and the plates whirled before him, his ears buzzed, he gasped for air, took a few step

toward the window with the purpose of opening it, and the dull sound of a falling body attracted the attention of Anthyme, who turned round to see his master lying stretched upon the floor as if he had been struck down by a thunderbolt.

When, on a calm and bright afternoon, Régis awoke to consciousness, he found himself lying in his bed without any clear idea of how long he had been in the state of stupor from which he had just emerged ; a feverish stupor crossed by delirious visions, by horrible nightmares, red with fire and slaughter, or lurid with drownings in green water, warm or icy, according to the degree of fever of

his limbs. Two images he had seen clearly in the confusion of his ideas—his daughters, now tender and lovely, again with hard faces and dry eyes, looking at him suffering and dying, without stretching out a little hand to give him a drop of water to quench his thirst. At last he returned to the world of reality, blinking his eyes a little, dazzled by the long bar of sunshine that fell like a golden scarf across the light-coloured carpet of his quiet and orderly room, with the window half-open behind the drawn curtains, through whose flowered folds he could see birds flying and tall branches waving.

Beside the window sat a woman dressed in deep mourning, leaning

toward the light, her eyes fixed on her work. From his bed De Fagan could see only a white neck bending over, and a reddish brown fringe on which the light was shining, but he had recognized Pauline Hulin and Maurice seated on a tabouret at her feet, reading. After all the agitating and sinister visions of his delirium, this one caused him so intense a delight that he feared to see it fade away and vanish into space like the others. He closed his eyes, opened them again, and saw the same picture, gilded by a sunbeam that had found its way under the curtain ; only this time Maurice had raised his head, and, their glances meeting in a smile of

recognition, the boy, without the aid of his crutch, sprang forward, and threw himself into his friend's arms. Pauline approached him also with outstretched hands, and in the rapid examination which Régis made, he saw that she had grown paler, that the contours of her face looked more delicate in their frame of mourning, that a new sadness rested on her good and truthful face.

Weakened by his illness, his eyes filled with tears, he kissed her hands. "My friend! my friend!" he said; then, drawing her toward him and lowering his voice on account of the child, who was near them, he said, "And free—free at last!"

But she released her hands, saying, "Ah, no, Régis, not that—let us never speak of that."

It was true that, in the tragic event that had so recently taken place, there was a comprehensible motive for delicacy and reserve, and at once changing the subject, he asked her how long it was since she had returned. A week, really? A whole week near him without his having recognised her, felt that she was there, in his delirium! On the evening of her arrival she had found poor Anthyme distractedly looking for a nurse, and then, remembering the many hours spent by Régis beside her child, she had installed herself, like a sister of charity, at the writer's bedside,

until his daughters, who had been informed of his illness, should come to take her place.

“ Ah, yes ! my daughters, why are they not here ? ” He grew excited, his cheeks burned. Mme. Hulin tried to calm him. Anthyme had sent a dispatch at the commencement of his illness. But Corsica was far away ; perhaps the sea was rough—perhaps they had had no one to accompany them. And perhaps, even, among the letters which had arrived during his illness, there might be an answer from his daughters.

And, the mail being scattered on the bed, two little notes, bearing the Corsican postmark and signed by Ninette, were read aloud

by Mme. Hulin to the father, impatient to know their contents but too weak to read them himself. She was grieved to the heart, poor Nina, grieved to the heart, in her first letter, at the sudden illness of her father, also at the departure of the squadron, but she hoped that her father would soon be well again, and that the squadron would soon return. Rose was at Bastia, where she had gone with Cousin to say good-bye to young Rémory, who was about to sail for the Continent. The second letter announced the speedy return to Paris of Rose and Ninette, accompanied by M. and Mme. La Posterolle; when they would run to see their dear little father. Hy-

gienic advice followed, recommendations to guard against the chill of the night, the mists of the garden, to use a certain flannel, with the address of the manufacturer.

“It is very kind,” said De Fagan, who had listened to the letter, stroking little Maurice’s blonde silky hair ; “very kind, but I would have had time to die several times over without seeing them.”

Mme. Hulin did not insist, fearing to augment a grief that she felt to be profound, and leaving him alone with the child, she went into the adjoining room where Anthyme’s energetic beckonings had been summoning her for a few moments past.

Mademoiselle—a tall spare woman, with spectacles—was there, having come to inquire for M. de Fagan.

“On the part——” said *Mme. Hulin*, interrogatively.

“On the part of his daughters,” responded the Englishwoman with arrogance.

“They are in Paris, then?”

“Likely.”

Pauline lowered her voice, fearing lest the father should hear:

“M. de Fagan is better, but if he were to learn from any one but themselves that his daughters were in Paris it would be enough to kill him. You may say that to those young ladies.”

The governess measured Pauline

Hulin with a meaning glance and, turning on the heels of her square-toed shoes, left the room without a word, without a bow.

Three days before the *La Poste-rolles* had established themselves with a family at *Cours-la-Reine*, while waiting for the marriage of their daughter to take place, and for the nomination of the head of the house to the Council of State. Rose's first thought on disembarking had been for her father; she would have hurried to him at once with Ninette but for the objections of her mother, whose jealousy was aroused by this eagerness. The malady might be contagious, especially for people coming from

such a distance, from pure air. It would be necessary to see, to make inquiries. "But we know already, mamma; congestion of the lungs is not contagious," Rose had replied. Then Mme. La Posterolle, majestically compressing her lips, made allusion to a certain person whom her daughters would run the risk of meeting at M. de Fagan's, outraging all propriety. Rose protested.

"Mme. Hulin? Oh, that ended long ago. I think she is not even in Paris." In order to assure herself the mother sent Mademoiselle to the Boulevard Beauséjour; the latter returned so well-satisfied, that while still at a distance on the Cours-la-Reine she made signs

with her umbrella to the ladies who were waiting for her on the balcony.

“Mme. Hulin herself received me,” she said triumphantly. And the mother added: “I knew very well that it had not ended.” The young girl, wounded to the heart, said, in a tone of indifference: “Since he has that lady to take care of him, he does not need us.”

“Especially as he is a great deal better,” added Mademoiselle.

“Are we not going to see him, then?” Ninette asked her sister, with some uneasiness.

“You may do so if you wish—I will not.”

“You are wrong,” said the younger, who thought of a multi-

tude of interests about which the elder sister did not care in the least, but she could not succeed in changing her resolution.

Days passed. Régis still kept his bed: his convalescence was aided, however, by the mildness of the spring, the vivifying influence of reawakening nature. He had already received a few visitors, sitting up in bed, but the doctor having forbidden him to talk he would spend whole days playing dominoes with Maurice or listening to Pauline Hulin reading, in her pleasant voice, in the half-light of the cool and quiet room; readings often accompanied and accentuated by the tender cooing of some ring-dove standing on the window-sill.

At times, interrupting the game or the reading, the sick man would utter his thoughts aloud: "But what can be the matter? Why do they no longer write to me?" The recollection of his daughters tortured him, but a few words of his friend's, a few vague explanations uttered at random, quickly dispelled his anxieties, less by the excuses which she invented than by the caressing expression of her voice and eyes while she uttered them.

Never, since they had known each other, had he felt himself so charmed, so fascinated, though Pauline made no effort to attract him: on the contrary, releasing her hands, when he tried to take

them in his, avoiding their former conversations on love and marriage, especially every allusion to recent events—the death of Hulin, her journey, all those things about which Régis was most anxious to hear but did not dare to inquire.

One day, however, when they were alone, she embroidering by the open window, through which she looked from time to time down into the garden, where the little boy was gamboling about, filling the air with his joyous cries, De Fagan gave a sigh from the bed. “Ah, that garden; when I returned from Corsica, what emotion it caused me to find it deserted!” And, as she did not answer: “Why did you not apprise me of your de-

parture by a line, by a word?" he added.

"My mind was so distracted when I went away." Mme. Hulin spoke looking straight before her. "My father-in-law's dispatch: 'Hulin is dying, come quickly!' had shocked me so deeply. At first I could not believe it; I thought it some trap. Thus it was that while I went alone to Havre, Annette took the child with her to the heart of the Vosges. But the dispatch was true; he was dead when I arrived."

She had never before said so much about her journey. But what he most desired to know, the motive of her husband's return to her house after the horrible

scene between them, of this she had not breathed a word, and he, filled with suspicions, with strange ideas, contented himself with asking, embarrassed at his own question : " Do you know why he killed himself ? "

" No," she replied with an effort, " I do not know. Perhaps he was weary of that life of hatred, of the unhappy situation in which we found ourselves, and from which there was no escape. Ah, unhappy man ! "

" With what pity you speak of him ! " said De Fagan, with compressed lips ; " you loved him still, then ? "

Without answering his question, Pauline replied :

“Do you think that he would have killed himself if I had loved him still? No, no; but to see him lying there on that bed, his mouth blackened with powder, when two days before——”

“Two days before?”

She had risen without finishing the sentence, and stood looking out of the window at the child playing in the garden below.

“And the father, the poor father!” she said, reseating herself, “if you could have seen him beside that bed of death, beside what had been his son, you would have been filled with pity as I was. The few days I remained at Havre I spent constantly with him, without taking even the time to

write a letter. Besides, I did not know that you had returned; and then——”

She looked out of the window again. “Stay,” she cried, “I do not see Maurice.”

The bell rang on the stairs, announcing a visitor for De Fagan. Mme. Hulin on these occasions generally went into another room, to avoid comment; she was preparing to leave the room, gathering up hastily the little articles belonging to her work-basket, when he made a sign to her to remain. The conversation interested him deeply, and he wished to bring it to a conclusion.

A door closed, light hurried footsteps were heard, and, at the door

of the room, hastily thrown open, Maurice announced with a cry of delight : “ Here they are ; here are Rose and Ninette ! ” Through the glass door of the garden he had seen them ringing the hall-door bell, and delighted to see them, as much on his own account as for the joy their coming would give Régis, the child clapped his hands, threw a kiss to his mother, and ran upstairs to welcome Ninette, who entered first, holding her head high, her veil drawn down to her chin, saying, as she waved aside the child with a gesture of indifference, without looking at him :

“ It is we, father.”

She stopped in the middle of the room, measuring Mme. Hulin with

her glance, as if surprised at finding her there. •

“My girls! my girls!” cried De Fagan agitatedly, opening wide his arms. But Rose, who had just entered, paused, as her sister had done, her step arrested by the same apparition. “Well, my children, what is the matter?” he cried, with annoyance.

“The matter, father”—it was Rose, the elder of the sisters, who spoke, one hand resting on the shoulder of her younger sister, the other stretched out with a melodramatic gesture of studied emotion, like the tremolo of her voice—“the matter is that neither Ninette nor I will remain an instant longer here, if you do not tell that woman to leave the room.”

Holding the hand of her little boy, who had already hidden himself in her skirts, Pauline was about to leave the room with him when De Fagan caught her hastily by the arm, and raising himself up in the bed, said: "Leave the room—you, the devoted, the tireless nurse, who saved my life when I was abandoned by everybody? Let them leave the room, rather; those bad daughters who would have let me die without a word, without a look!" Pauline tried to interrupt him. "Yes, I know, you always have excuses for them—their youth, their weakness, the counsels of those wretches down there. I believed this for a long time, but that is all over now;

you are wicked daughters, I tell you, daughters without pity. •Ah, how they have treated me ! How many times they have stabbed me to the heart ! ”

Then suddenly becoming tender again, the expression of his eyes and of his voice completely changed : “ Rose,” he cried, “ my eldest, I entreat it of you ; ask pardon of the good woman whom you have so unjustly outraged ; do this, my Rose.”

Mme. Hulin protested with dignity, proudly. •But he insisted ; “ Yes, she must do it, I wish it, they are my children, they have a right to obey me ; you hear, Rose, Ninette, I command you.”

The hesitation of the elder sister

could be divined from the swaying of her tall, slender form ; but jealousy conquered.

“ No, not that, never ! ” she cried.

“ And you, Ninette, my darling ? ”

“ Oh, I agree with my sister.”

Then he burst out : “ Go away, bad, ungrateful daughters ! Go away, odious girls ! Let me never see you again. I am divorced from my wife, I will be divorced from my children, also. Tell your mother so ; never again, you understand, never again ! ”

His face had become distorted, his voice hoarse, and falling back exhausted on the pillow, still holding Pauline’s hand in his, he

gasped, "Never again!" as Rose left the room, sobbing, followed by Ninette, with dry eyes and rebellious countenance.

X.

AT the far end of the Avenue de l'Observatoire, under the chestnut trees that formed a leafy dome overhead, Mme. La Posterolle was nervously tapping with her heel the asphalte pavement, where at intervals stood benches on which lounged ragged men out of employment, or wretches planning work for the gallows.

Dressed from her stockings to her umbrella entirely in black, with which the old lady's powdered wig she wore formed a striking

contrast, she seemed little sensible to the flattering surprise expressed on the faces of the young artists or students, who, before entering the house of the fencing-master near by, turned round to look at this old lady with eyes so alluringly youthful, who walked with the firm and commanding step of a sea captain walking his deck. From time to time she looked at a diminutive watch set in a leather bracelet, muttering with angry impatience : “ Five o’clock—ten minutes past five—twenty minutes past five,” and she was just asking herself how much longer she would be compelled to wait when De Fagan made his appearance at the end of the avenue, walking with

the slow and hesitating step of one who 'goes out for the first time after an illness.

As he had obstinately refused to see his daughters since the violent scene that had taken place on the occasion of their visit, his ex-wife had obtained this rendezvous from him for the purpose of settling certain details of Rose's marriage ; and Pauline Hulin, good and reasonable as ever, in the hope of reconciling him with his children, had resolved to accompany him as far as the Luxembourg, where Maurice and she were now waiting for him.

As soon as Mme. La Posterolle caught sight of him in the distance, looking thin and pale, his delicate

blonde moustache almost white, she hurried forward to meet him, emphasising with a little laugh the cruelty of her thought, "Nothing but the husk of my former husband!" but approaching him nevertheless with demonstrations of interest, with catlike, caressing little airs. He, remembering all her abominable acts of treachery, up to the last, the most cruel of all, which had caused the rupture with his daughters, felt contempt, anger, and also—because he was weak—fear, as if he saw before him the evil genius of his life, some maleficent Kobold hidden in the depths of this sombre avenue of trees.

"It was good of you to have

come," she began, walking beside him, accommodating her step to his. She not being able to go to De Fagan's house, on account of the proprieties, nor De Fagan to hers, she had thought of a meeting in their old avenue to arrange about matters of mutual interest.

He interrupted her quickly :
" Why not address yourself to my lawyer? He has my instructions."

" In which you showed yourself, as always, to be a gentleman." But money was not the only thing in question ; it was necessary also to arrange about ordering the breakfast, about the procession, and where the contract was to be signed. At his house ? At hers ? There would be the same objection

in the case of both. Then she had thought of the house of the Rémorys, the young man's parents. Would that suit him? Good. Now, another thing. The marriage—a religious one, of course—would take place at the Madeleine. Rose desired, above all things, to enter the church leaning on her father's arm.

“She knows what she must do for that,” said De Fagan, suddenly standing still, with a determined and imperious look.

The lady's eyes blinked.

“A little note of apology to Mme. Hulin, I suppose?” she said.

“Positively!”

“Oh, she will do it very will-

ingly. She has so set her heart on leaning on the arm of her distinguished father," emphasising the word "distinguished" to have it clearly understood that the question was one of vanity and not of affection. She added, smiling: "Less favoured than my daughter, I shall take the arm of President Rémory."

"Then we are both to be present?" said De Fagan, stupefied.

"Naturally, since we are marrying our daughter."

They walked on in silence for a few moments, then he said:

"It is curious, all the same. And your husband? And La Posterolle?" His tone was still ironical.

“It is precisely about La Posterolle that I wanted to speak to you. It would be hard to exclude him—my husband—Rose’s step-father—and then it was he who made the match. Before entering the magistracy Gaston Rémory was in his office. Don’t you think he ought to have a place in the *cortège*?”

“I see no objection to it.” And, plunged suddenly into a sea of reflections, De Fagan allowed her to go on babbling, uninterrupted, at his side, shaking her bracelets, her parasol, extolling the Rémorys—the president, the president’s wife, and that delightful Saint-Cyrian who was hovering about Ninette. “Another marriage in

preparation, my dear friend, an occasion for future meetings under our great trees ; I love them, these great trees, do not you ? ”

He did not answer her ; his mind was absorbed in the contemplation of the picture evoked by her words, of an endless succession of lugubrious meetings like this one, in which, at the end of one of these long walks, his former wife would appear, each time older and more changed than the last, more tremulous and more malignant. She aroused him from his reverie by this unexpected question :

“ And you, my little Fagan, when do you intend to marry ? There is no longer anything to

prevent your doing so, I suppose, now that M. Hulin is dead."

He started, gave her a searching look, and then said :

"Ah, you know it, then ?"

"I know many things of which you are ignorant, I wager."

By the quivering of her lips and her sidelong glance he comprehended that she was going to wound him, to wound him deeply. But an unfortunate curiosity urged him on.

"What do you mean by that ?" he said. "What am I ignorant of ?"

"Well, for instance, why the husband of the beautiful Pauline killed himself. I am sure you have not the slightest suspicion

of it. Well, he killed himself—they are his own words in a letter of adieu to a friend—because he could not live and remember that she was henceforward dead to him. Do you understand? No, you do not; is it not so?”

So well had he understood or thought he understood that the unhappy De Fagan, seized by a sudden faintness, sat down upon the nearest bench.

“It is quite natural, the first time you go out, your limbs are still a little unsteady,” said Mme. La Posterolle, assiduously attentive; then, in answer to De Fagan’s gesture indicating the seat beside him, “No, thanks, I prefer to stand,” said the Parisian, with a

little pout, and, leaning on her elegant parasol, swaying her body from side to side, she continued: "You see, the time was drawing near, as you know, when the child was to pass, by the law's decree, into the brutal clutches of the husband, to the despair of the mother. * Suddenly Hulin presented himself at the house of his wife—this was during your journey to Corsica—and said to her—I give you almost his exact words: 'If you will consent to what I ask, I will give you a document renouncing all my legal rights over our child.' "

De Fagan sprang to his feet. "But this is absurd," he cried. "Such a document would have no

value. There is not a court in the world——”

“ I know that, I know that, but Mme. Hulin did not know it, nor her husband either, probably. I learned it from Councillor de Malville. There! you see, I have betrayed my authority after all; but that only makes the° story all the more authentic. Malville told me, then, that these sorts of contracts, these amicable agreements are made as frequently among the better classes as they are among the peasantry, and that, in short, in this country, where no one is supposed to be ignorant of the law, hardly any one knows the first word about it. But to return to our Hulins, the unhappy

woman, terrified at the thought of losing her son, consented.”

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Oh, with what art the poisoner distilled her venom, and how she watched it working its effect on his pale and hollow countenance, that would have inspired any other woman with pity.

“So that, on his return to Havre, he preferred to die rather than live and remember that she was henceforward dead to him, as his letter to Malville expressed it.”

De Fagan had risen to his feet, muttering between his clenched teeth :

“Well, for a depositary of dying confidences, give me your Malville.”

“ You may say so, indeed,” she replied, with her wicked laugh. “ You have only to play Wagner to him, and he will turn himself inside out for you.”

They walked on side by side in silence for a few moments, then, observing his abstraction, she added: “ Well, we must separate.” She took his hand and said: “ The children are here, do you not wish to see them ? ”

He hesitated ; then, in an angry tone, answered :

“ No, another day.”

“ Very well. Till by and by, my little Fagan.”

She left him at the crowded crossing, and walked with a light and joyous step to the corner of

the Boulevard de Port Royal, where an open landau, gay with bright-coloured parasols, was waiting for her.

“Alone?” asked Rose, disappointed at not seeing her father.

“No matter! everything is arranged,” responded Mme. La Posterolle lightly. And taking the large hand, like a washerwoman’s bat, which Mademoiselle held out to her to assist her to enter: “Ah! the good fellow!” she added, “he bears no malice. He will sign the contract and come to the wedding.”

“And my dowry?” said Ninette; “did you speak of my dowry?”

“Of course. But, what is better than all, I think I have rendered

his marriage with his madame impossible.”

The younger sister smiled meaningly under her veil. “Oh, then, if the competition is at an end ——” she said. And, as the landau began to move, Rose, no longer having a pretext for her jealousy, her tall form ‘swaying with the motion of the carriage, murmured :

‘ “Poor papa ! ”

He, meantime, proceeded through the green and flowery squares, over which the setting sun threw a network of golden light, to rejoin Mme. Hulin and her child at the Luxembourg. As he walked along, looking toward the high railing of the garden, its bars casting violet

shadows that seemed to lengthen out endlessly, he thought of the friend who was waiting for him behind that barrier stretching into distance, an intangible barrier, seeming an image of the obstacles that separated their destinies. He could now understand the scruples that had made the charming and delicate Pauline, who had appeared to love him when she was not free, grow so suddenly reserved when she became a widow and the mistress of her own acts—exaggerated scruples which, doubtless, he would be able to dissipate in time by the assiduity of his love.

And he hastened on, radiant; inhaling, with the quickened senses of convalescence, the warm air,

the mingled perfumes from the flower - beds refreshed by the feathery spray of the sprinklers that fell with the murmuring sound of a fountain. But, a few steps further on, certain phrases of Mme. La Posterolle recurred to him. The poison began to work, to run through his veins.

He reached the door of the Luxembourg, still plunged in these cruel and contradictory reflections. Before entering, he turned round, stretched his clenched hand toward the avenue through whose sombre verdure could be caught glimpses of the slender and voluptuous figures of Carpeaux, supporting the world in

their raised hands — those five figures that unite in themselves all the feminine snares of the earth, and, shaking it, muttered : “ Vermin ! you know well how to make the flesh of man bleed ! ”

A little hand, slipped into his, drew him toward the garden, as if his friend, from the distant bench on which she sat, had divined his sufferings, and had sent Maurice to draw him from his cruel reflections.

“ Heavens ! how pale you are,” said Mme. Hulin, as he approached her, and, as she asked him if he did not feel cold, her voice betrayed a secret uneasiness—that instinctive fear that a woman has in the presence of a danger which is kept from her, but which she

divines. What was it? What had he just learned that had so altered his countenance?

“Had you not better sit down for a moment?” she said; “perhaps it is only that you are fatigued.”

“On the contrary, let us walk; I have need to feel your arm within mine.”

He noticed that she was trembling, as ill at ease and as disturbed as he was himself. Ought he frankly to seek an explanation, and at once end the uncertainty that tortured both their hearts? With the child running on before them, they mechanically follow the terrace on the left; that on the right, at this hour overflowing,

even to the railing, with promenaders, on account of the music whose strains came to them through the trees in snatches, mingled with the shrill cries of children and of swallows, that mad and giddy life of young things that seems to grow more intense as the daylight fades. And the promenade seemed to him so sweet in the calmness of the closing day, the woman at his side so fresh in her mourning, with a colour like that of her child, that De Fagan had not the courage to disturb these tranquillising harmonies, and contented himself with simply giving an account of the interview in so far as it related to the marriage of his daughter.

“ Ah, my friend, how right you were ! ” he ended. “ What a confusion divorce is, and what bizarre complications it brings with it ! Rose is to be married in a few days, and her marriage is in every way according to rule ; but, her parents being divorced, see what a strange spectacle the wedding will present ! ”

He ironically described the *cortège*, he at its head—the father leading the bride. Behind him Mme. La Posterolle, the mother, but no longer bearing the same name as her daughter ; finally, La Posterolle, the man of all others most conventional, figuring also in the procession, and finding himself perfectly at his ease in it,

“Imagine all these ascending the interminable steps of the Madeleine, their entrance through the grand door, and the tapers blazing, the organ sending forth its strains to welcome this cacophony. Ah! if Paris still knew how to laugh——”

He, De Fagan, did not laugh, wounded in his paternal affection, his daughters finally lost to him. And as Pauline tried to interpose once more in their favour a smile flitted across Régis' face, a smile of disenchantment that was more bitter than tears.

“No, my friend, you are mistaken; my children, taken complete possession of by that wicked woman, belong to me no more.

My lawyer forewarned me of it truly ; she has done her work with an ant-like, a teredo-like persistence, slowly, little by little, day by day. And to think that to the end of my life I am bound to this creature, that she will never let me go ! We shall meet again at the marriage of Ninette ; later, become grandparents, we shall meet at the baptisms. I shall have her for a gossip, you will see ; a gossip who will teach my grandchildren to hate me as she has taught my children to hate me. Ah, divorce ! that severance of the tie that I extolled as a deliverance, as you may remember, that made me so happy, so proud —when one has children, it is

not even a dissolution of the bond."

Mme. Hulin shook her head gently.

"When there are children a separation is little better—it is only apparent, fictitious, the child stands always between the father and the mother."

This was spoken in those profoundly melancholy accents by which she betrayed her inward griefs, for the habitual tone of her voice was of a vibrant and crystal clearness, like her nature.

"What, then, is to be done?" murmured De Fagan. After a long pause filled with the last dying strains of the march from Lohengrin, he ended aloud the

mute conference of their thoughts. "Y^es, the integrity of marriage—there would be true happiness—to say to one's self in choosing one's wife . When I die this is the breast on which I shall lean my head to fall asleep, these are the lips that shall close my eyes. Therefore I desire that this breast shall be very tender, very pure ; these lips fresh, and for me alone ; thus it was that I had pictured marriage to myself."

Pauline sighed sadly. This was her only response, assenting and approving.

They had just descended the broad, rounded steps of the terrace, and were walking around the great fountain that shivered under the rosy sky in the sadness of the

falling twilight. This shiver communicated itself to them, even to the child, who had stopped running, and was now clinging to the folds of his mother's black gown.

“Had we not better return to the house?” she said, after a moment's silence; “for your first day you have been out a long time.”

“Yes, let us return,” said Régis, in the same dejected tone.

At the exit he was making his way through the throng of promenaders to look for a carriage, when, a few steps away, he perceived Mme. La Posterolle and her daughters, who had no doubt remained to hear the music, and who were now getting into their

landau. The striking toilettes of these ladies, their somewhat showy equipage, attracted a great deal of attention, of which Rose and Ninette seemed very proud.

“Let us get away,” said De Fagan, in a low voice to his companion. To have his darlings there close to him, radiant in their gay attire, and not to be able to embrace them, this was too hard!

Here was indeed a victim of divorce—this unhappy man watching his daughters and their mother—his true family—driving swiftly away in their landau, gay with laughter and bright ribbons, while he remained vacillating and restless, at the edge of the sidewalk, with this woman and this child,

whose deep mourning, which he accompanied but did not share, told clearly how far apart they were, how far apart they would no doubt for ever remain.

